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John Green

LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

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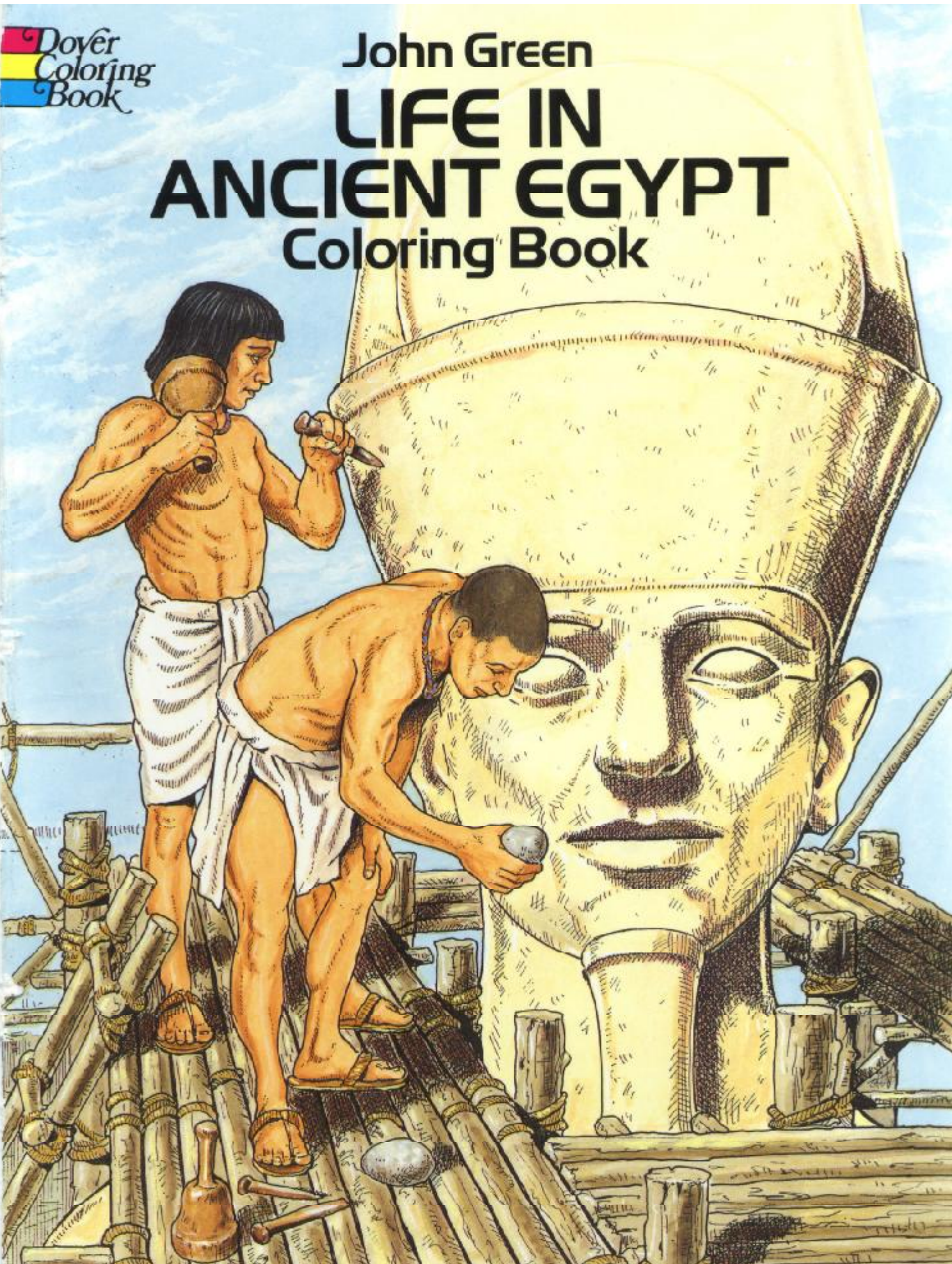

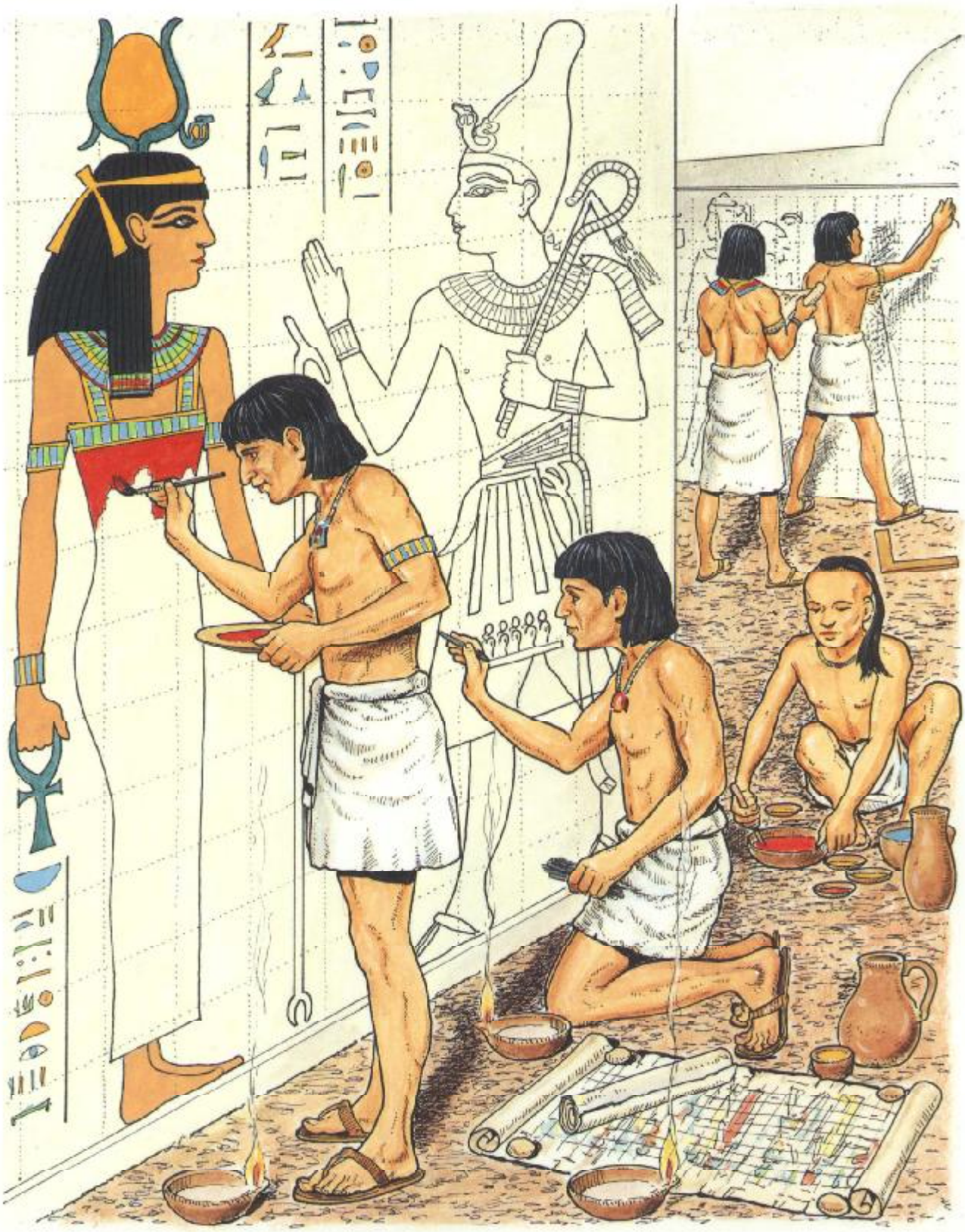

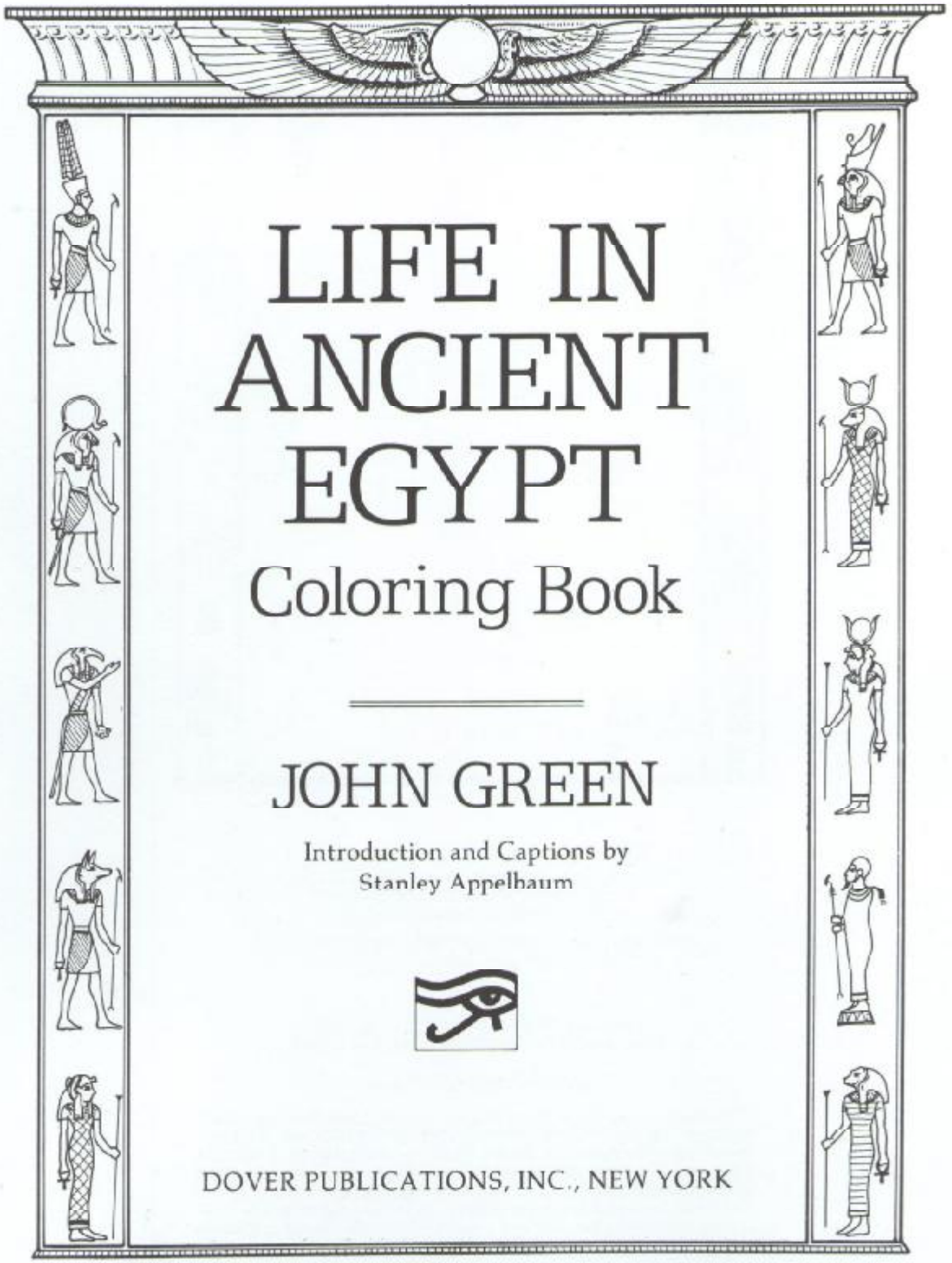

LIFE IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Coloring Book

JOHN GREEN

Introduction and Captions by
Stanley Appelbaum

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INTRODUCTION

The extreme fertility of the Nile valley and a handful of large oases, together with Egypt's nearness to the pioneering civilizations of the Asian Near East, gave the land of the pharaohs a decided advantage over its African neighbors, many of whom shared the same physical, cultural and linguistic heritage. By 4500 B.C., agriculture and livestock raising were well developed, and Egypt's late Stone Age art was among the finest anywhere. In the course of time, the scattered settlements were consolidated into two main centers of population: Upper Egypt (the southern area, around Thebes) and Lower Egypt (the northern area, around the Nile Delta). Although these halves of the country were always to remain distinct in certain ways, and the political capital would often shift from one of these regions to the other, it was the unification of the two, about 3000 B.C., that initiated Egyptian history as such, creating the dynastic period.

In words and pictures, the present book offers a brief survey of this history from unification to the Roman period (which began in 30 B.C.), including all of dynastic times (Dynasties 1–31) and the Ptolemaic era, which ended with the suicide of Cleopatra VII. Combined with this historical sketch is a glance at ancient Egyptian civilization, especially the everyday life and work of the people who left us such a remarkable artistic and cultural legacy.

We know more about Egyptian life than that of any other civilization of comparable age, not only from the writings but also from the vast number of images that the Egyptians themselves recorded—on sculptured and painted tomb and temple walls, on papyrus scrolls and in many other media. The illustrations in this book are based on these sources and on the remaining architectural monuments.

The captions, though necessarily brief and simple, are based on the most up-to-date publications and represent recent interpretations of the evidence as well as long-established knowledge. Egyptian proper names can be rendered in English in a variety of ways, and there is disagreement among scholars (within well-defined limits) on the dating of ancient Egyptian events. For both spelling and dating, the present book follows the very scholarly 1987 edition of the catalog of the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

The main divisions of the book are as follows:

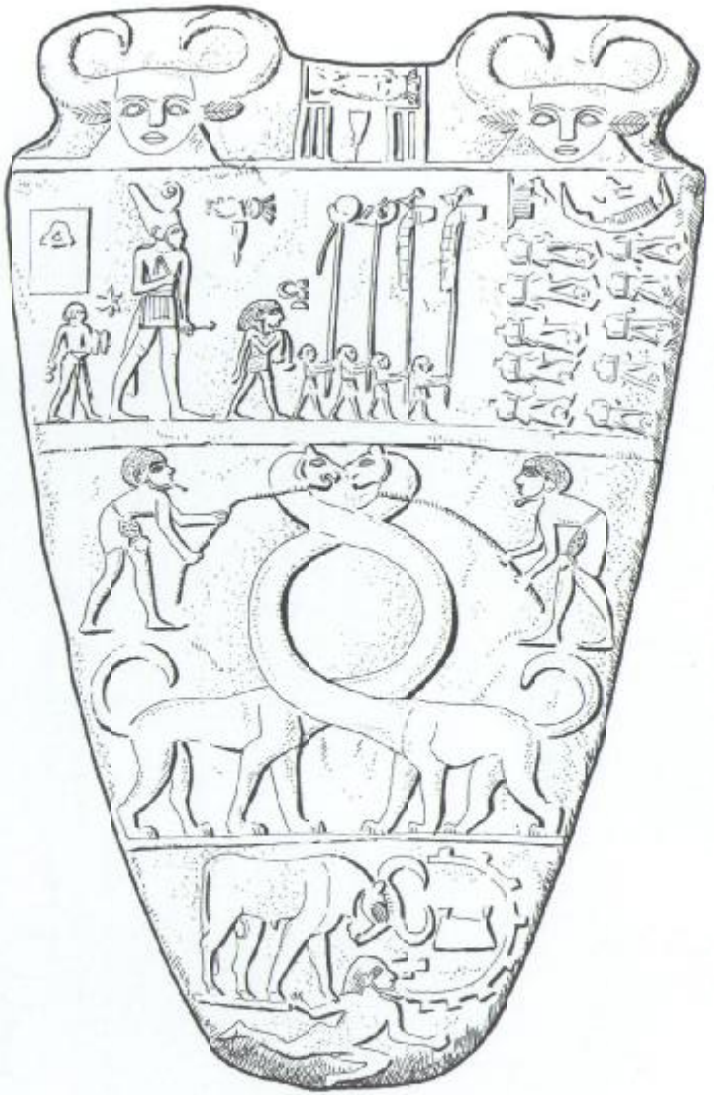
(1) Page 4: the unification of Egypt (ca. 3000 B.C.);

(2) Pages 5–19: the Old Kingdom (ca. 2700–2150 B.C.)—historical sketch and a selection of everyday activities generally valid throughout dynastic times;

(3) Pages 20–23: the First Intermediate Period, Middle Kingdom and the Hyksos period (ca. 2150–1550 B.C.);

(4) Pages 24–43: the New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1070 B.C.)—historical sketch and everyday activities more particularly related to the New Kingdom, with a special subsection on funerary practices (pages 40–43);

(5) Pages 44–48: later ancient Egyptian history to the Roman period.

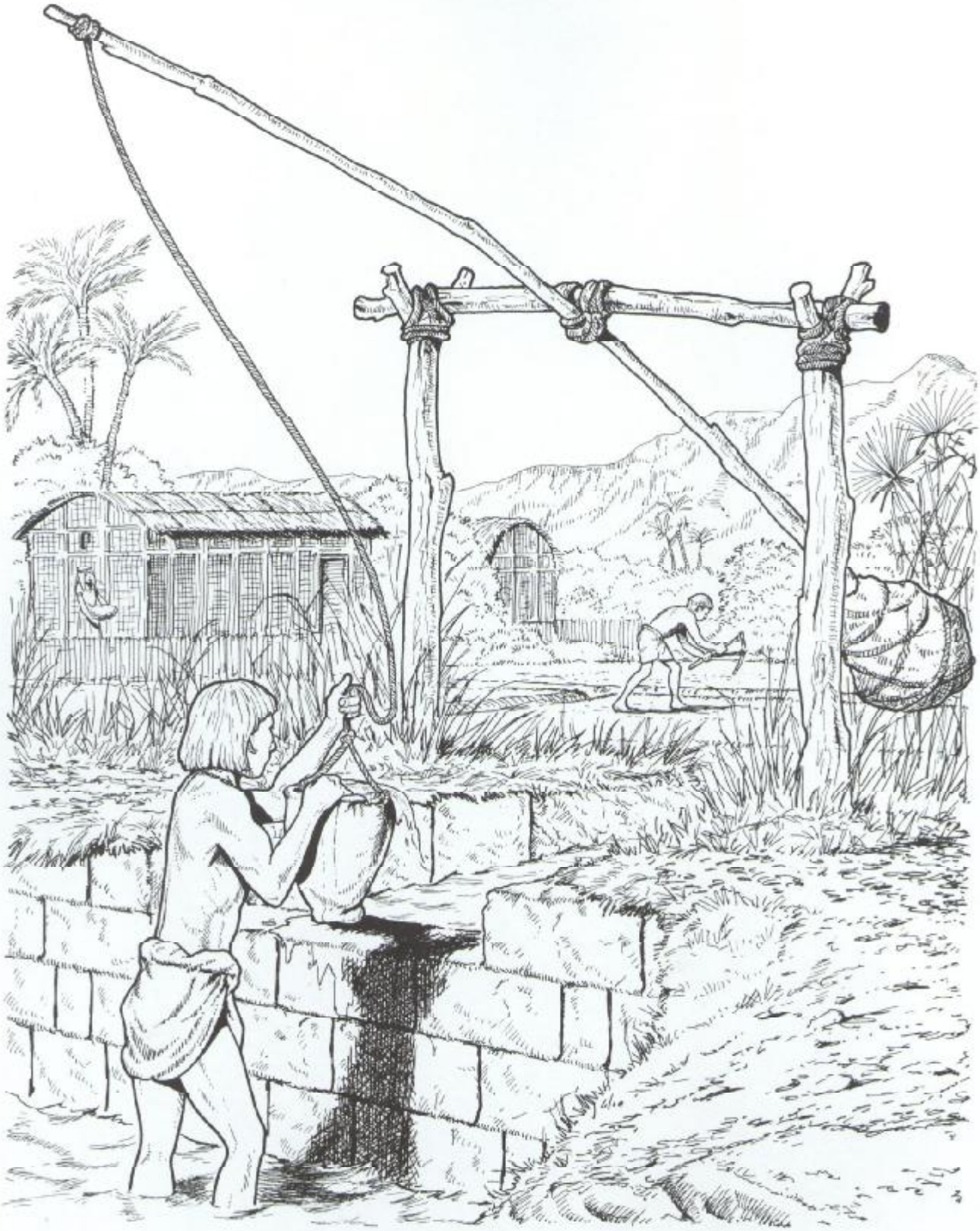


A stone palette recording the unification of Egypt. This object, now in the Egyptian Museum of Cairo, dates from about 3000 B.C. Ordinary palettes were used for grinding mineral pigments for painting or cosmetics. This highly ornate one (both sides of which are shown here) depicts King Narmer, one of the Upper Egyptian conquerors of Lower Egypt who established a single rule over the whole country. The association of the royal person with falcons and bulls was to remain a constant element in Egyptian political and religious thought, and the posture of the king smiting his submissive enemy recurred throughout the course of ancient Egyptian art. The Early Dynastic Era (Dyrasties 1 and 2) lasted until about 2700 B.C. The capital was at Memphis, near modern Cairo at the apex of the Nile Delta.

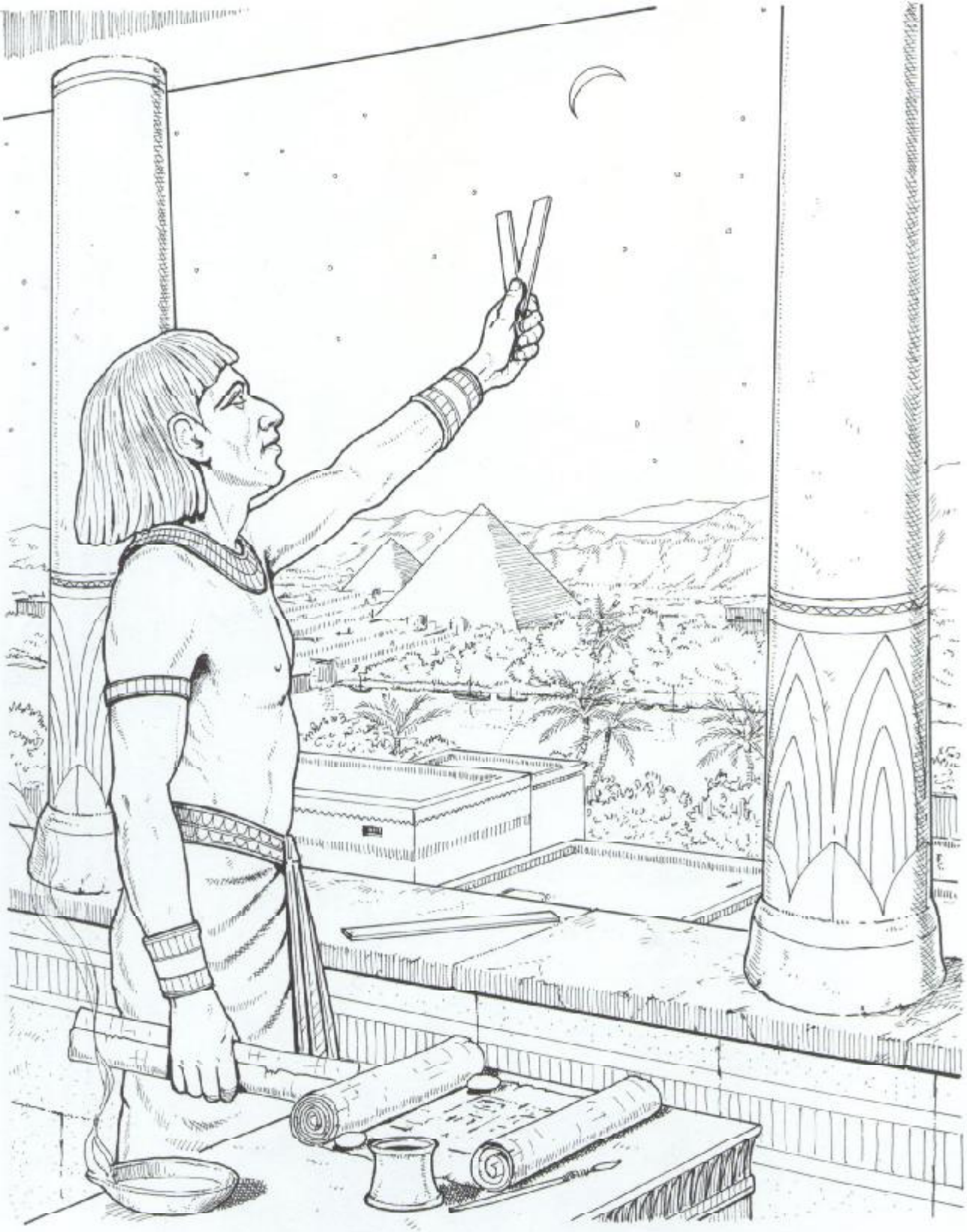
The step pyramid at Sakkara under construction. This pyramid was built in Dynasty 3 for King Djoser (reigned 2690–2660 B.C.). Dynasties 3–6 constitute the Old Kingdom period (ca. 2700–2150 B.C.). Many experts consider the artistic achievements of the Old Kingdom to be the greatest in all Egyptian history, and certainly in the field of architecture the pyramids (royal tombs) of that period were never surpassed. Djoser's pyramid, designed by the architect Imhotep, had six levels with setbacks, showing the development of the form out of the one-story "mastaba" tomb that continued to be used for noblemen. This pyramid and its huge ceremonial area (close to Cairo) are largely preserved and still admired today.

The Sphinx and the pyramids at Giza. On the outskirts of Cairo, these are among the world's chief tourist attractions. The three pyramids at this site were the tombs of pharaohs of Dynasty 4: Cheops (Khufu), his son Chefren (Khafre) and their close relative Menkaure (Mycerinus). Without iron tools, and using simple sledges, ramps and scaffolds, the Old Kingdom Egyptians raised pyramids up to 481 feet high (these figures pertain to Cheops's) and containing about 2½ million 2½-ton stone blocks. The 240-foot-long Sphinx, a reclining lion with a man's head, represents one of the Dynasty 4 monarchs. The tablet between its paws was erected ca. 1410 B.C. by the New Kingdom pharaoh Tuthmosis IV, who cleared the sand from the huge statue. Egyptian funerary complexes were located at the edge of the desert to preserve fertile land for farming.

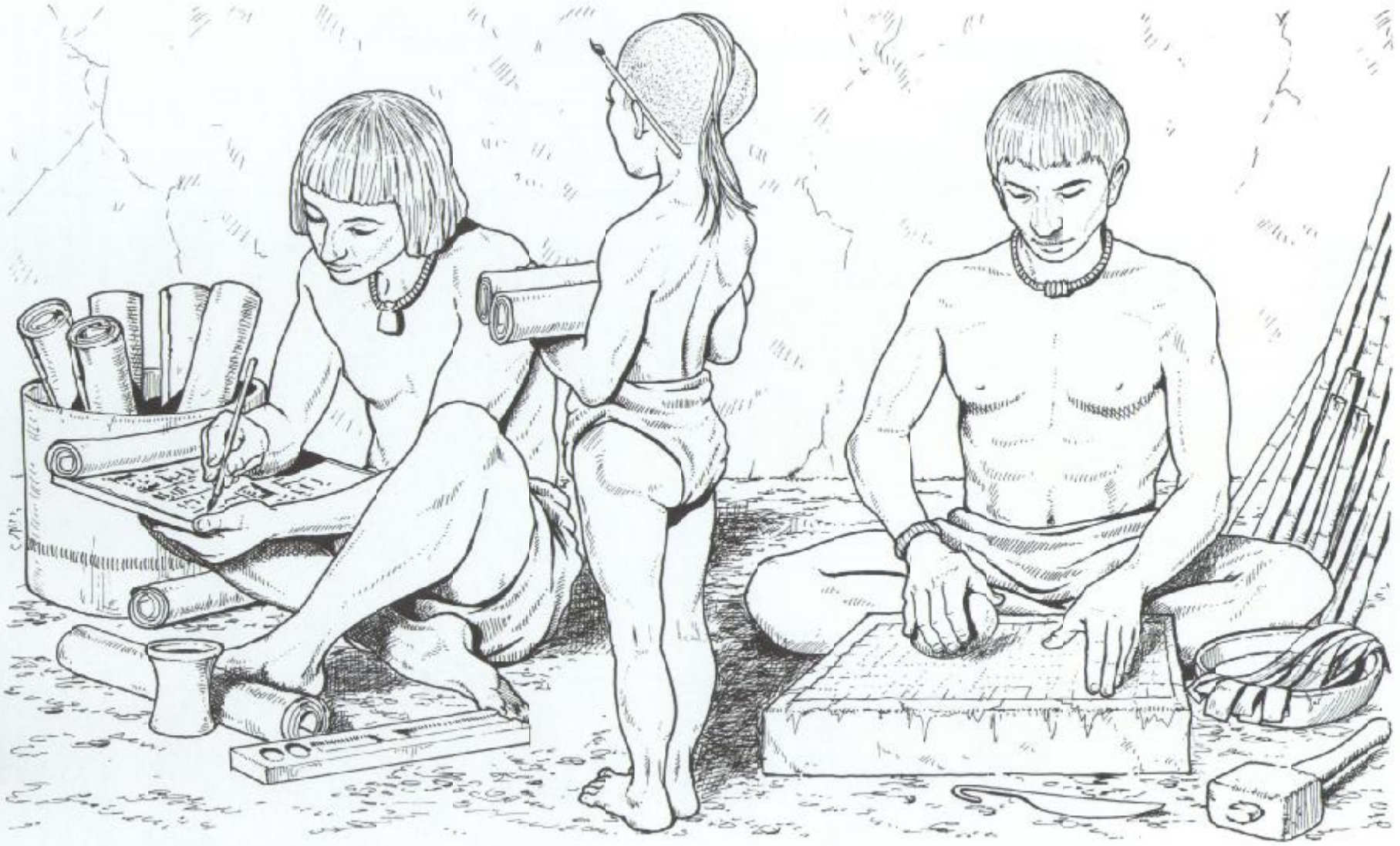
Fishermen. Fish from the Nile have remained an important food source from earliest times. The papyrus-stalk boat, with its upturned ends, became the prototype for certain much larger, elaborate Egyptian river craft. In its original simplest form it is still in use in parts of Africa today (as on Lake Chad in north-central Africa, and Lake Tana in Ethiopia). Nets and hooks were used by professional Egyptian fishermen, spears by hobbyists. Hippos were abundant in the Nile and often posed a threat. Pharaohs would hunt them in a traditional ritual, noblemen would hunt them for sport.



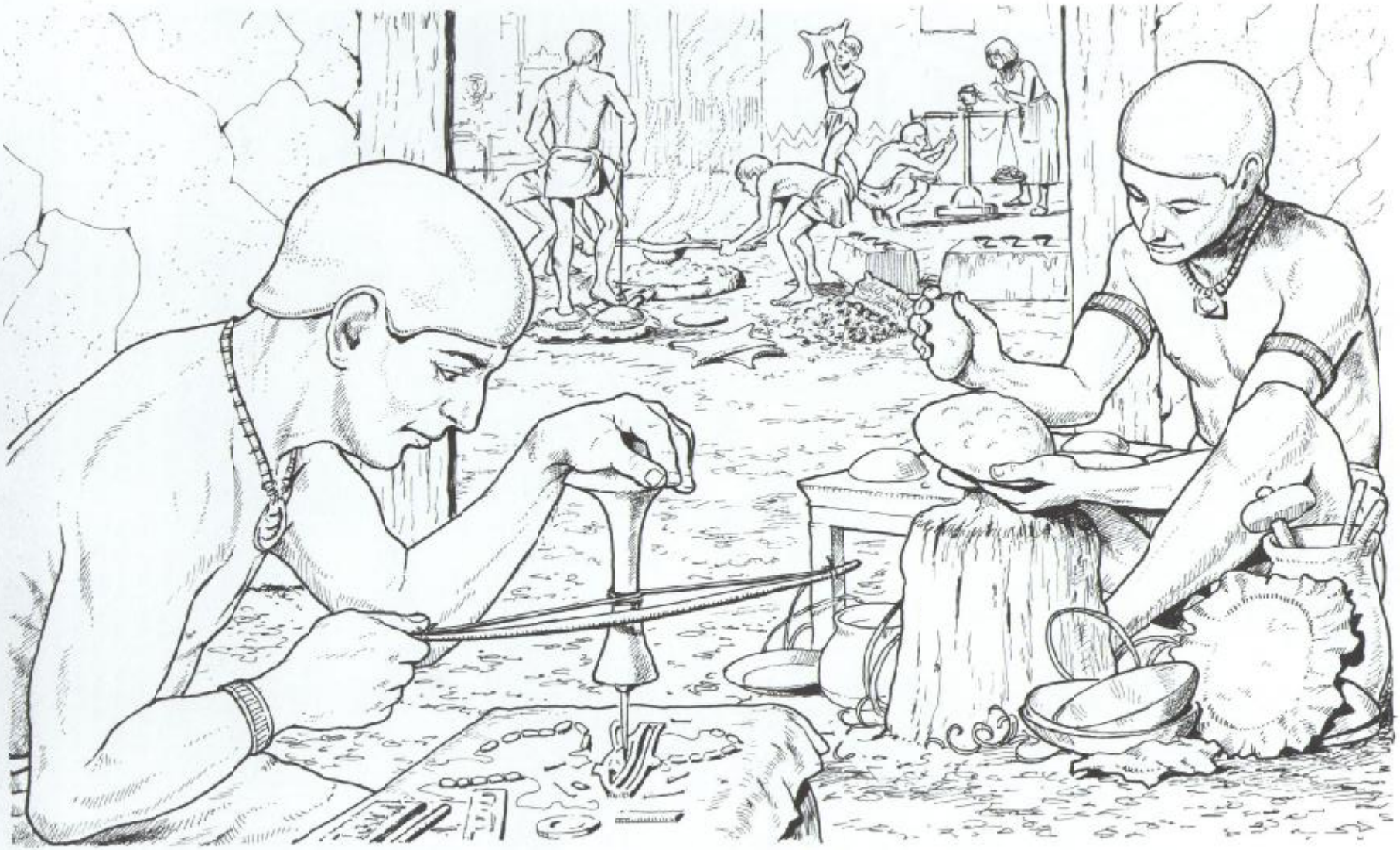
A farming scene along the Nile. The arable land was just a narrow strip on either side of the river, with desert and barren hills beyond. In the foreground is a shaduf (an Arabic word), a hand-operated sweep for raising water for irrigation; the counterweight lifts the filled bucket. The shaduf, invented in the Old Kingdom period, is still used in Egypt (and India) today. In the background are houses made of reeds with wooden frameworks. Because of Egyptian respect for tradition, this type of construction was echoed even in grandiose architecture. The farmer is using a typical hoe to break up the soil. The principal crops were grain for food, and flax for (linen) clothing.



A priest studying the stars. Egyptian astronomy never became a major theoretical science, but was used for calendrical purposes. The very complex calendar could only be fully understood by the priests, which bolstered their position in society. Priests also served local and national gods. When a god became extremely popular (extending his territory and taking over the powers and duties of numerous minor gods), his priesthood might grow rich and influential, even politically. This was the case in Dynasty 5 with the sun god Re (originally from the city of Heliopolis) and in Dynasty 18 with Amon (originally a god of Thebes and vicinity).

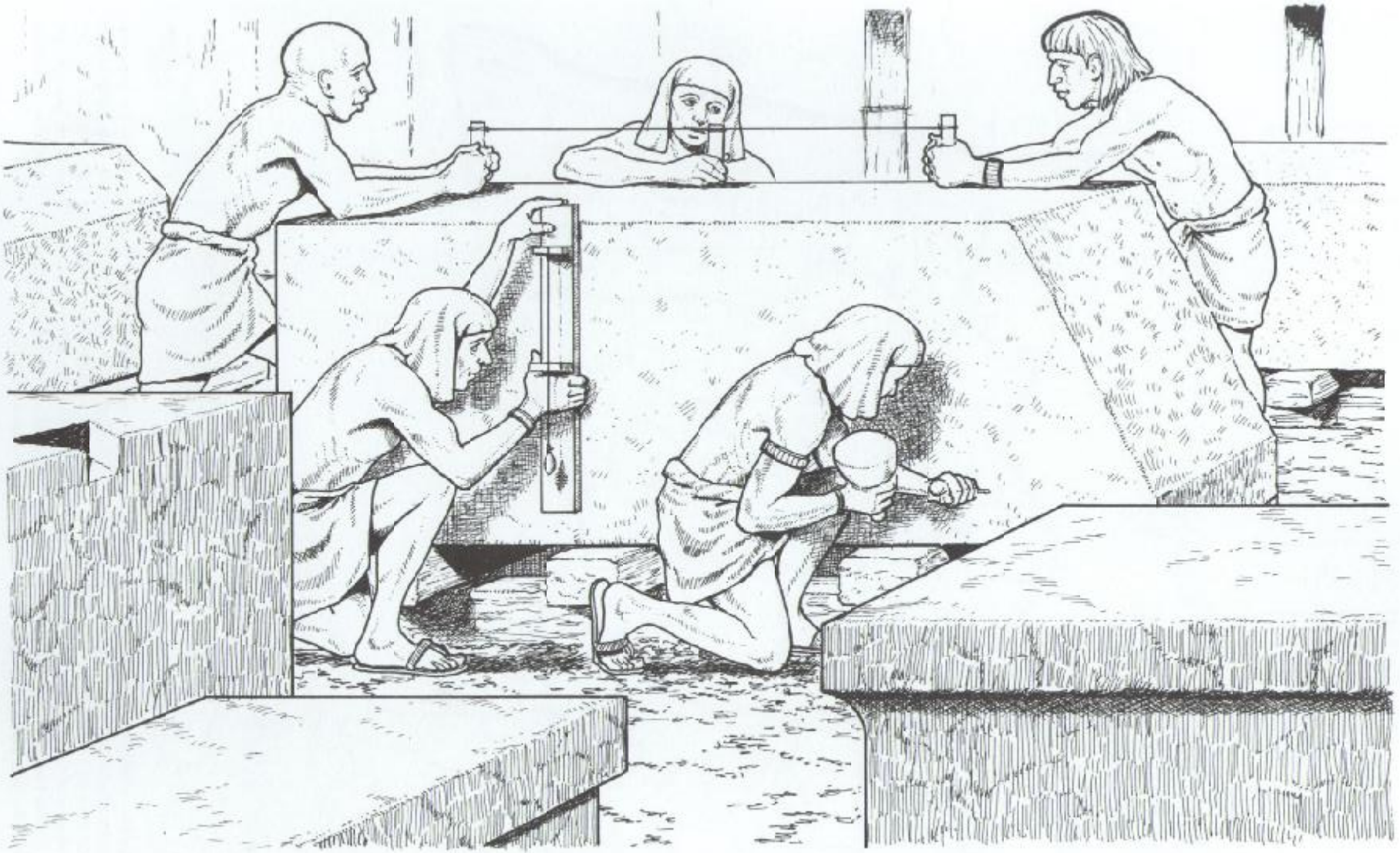


Making and writing on papyrus. The Egyptian writing system (hieroglyphics) was much more difficult than our alphabet, and not many people could read and write. Those who could—the so-called scribes—were very valuable to society as record and account keepers, letter writers, historians, etc. Their prestige and self-esteem were enormous. Our word paper is derived from the (Greek) name of the papyrus plant, a type of sedge. Some stalks are seen leaning at the right edge of the picture. In a bowl are strips cut from the plant, which will be pressed together into a sheet of writing paper and then smoothed with a stone. The writing is done in ink with a quill, reed pen or brush on rolls (scrolls) of papyrus.

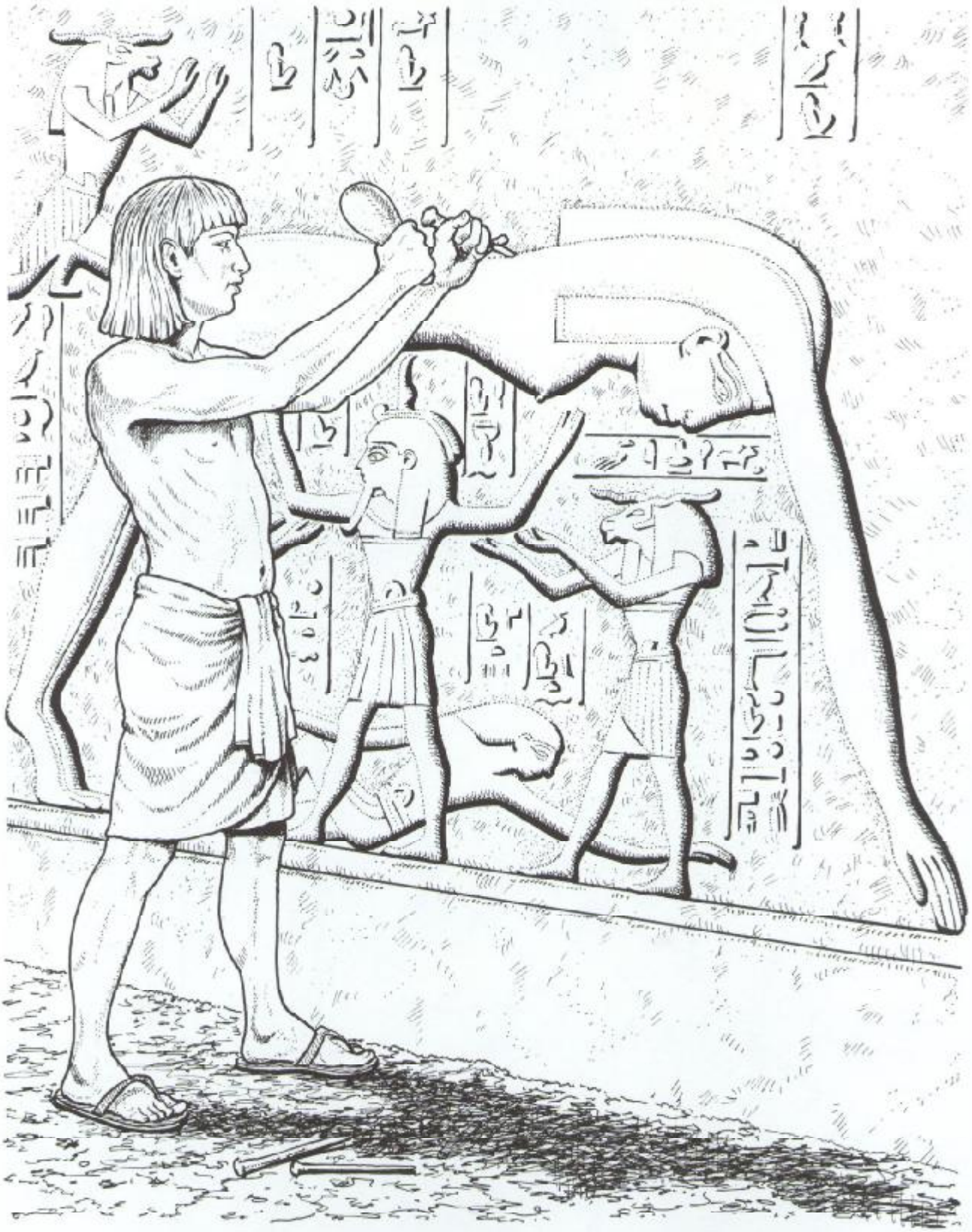


Goldsmiths and metalworkers. Egyptians did not use iron until nearly the end of the dynastic period, but they had access to many other metals. Their centuries-long control of the nearest gold sources (in Nubia; see the map on page 2) was a major factor in building Egyptian strength and influence. Egyptian metalwork and related arts were subtle and elegant, the jewelry of the Middle Kingdom being especially prized today. The worker in the foreground is drilling a perforation in an eye-of-Horus ornament (like the one in Tutankhamon's pectoral on page 34). His companion is beating a gold bowl into shape. In the background men are melting ingots of metal (note the foot-operated bellows) and weighing small items on a balance.

Quarrymen. They are splitting off blocks of stone with the aid of wooden wedges and boiling water. Stone of various grades and colors was plentiful in the desolate hills that flanked both banks of the Nile, and it was natural for the Egyptians to make generous use of this material in pyramids, tombs of the nobility, fortresses, palaces, temples and other buildings intended to be permanent (if not eternal). At times, exhausting expeditions were undertaken to desert areas to obtain just the right stone for a given purpose. The stone was hauled to the nearest point on the Nile, and then shipped to the construction site. Some remote quarries were used as hard-labor areas for convicted criminals or prisoners of war.



Stonemasons on a construction site. They are giving the stone blocks their definitive shape. Egyptian masonry was extremely fine, with the blocks fitting very neatly together. Stonemasons' tools included a variety of mallets, chisels, rollers and the like, along with devices to insure straightness in all directions. The masons and other artists who created the world-famous New Kingdom tombs in the Valley of the Kings near Thebes lived in a village of their own, and had a fairly high standard of living. Archeological excavations have revealed more about their interesting existence than is known about any other ancient Egyptian craftsmen.

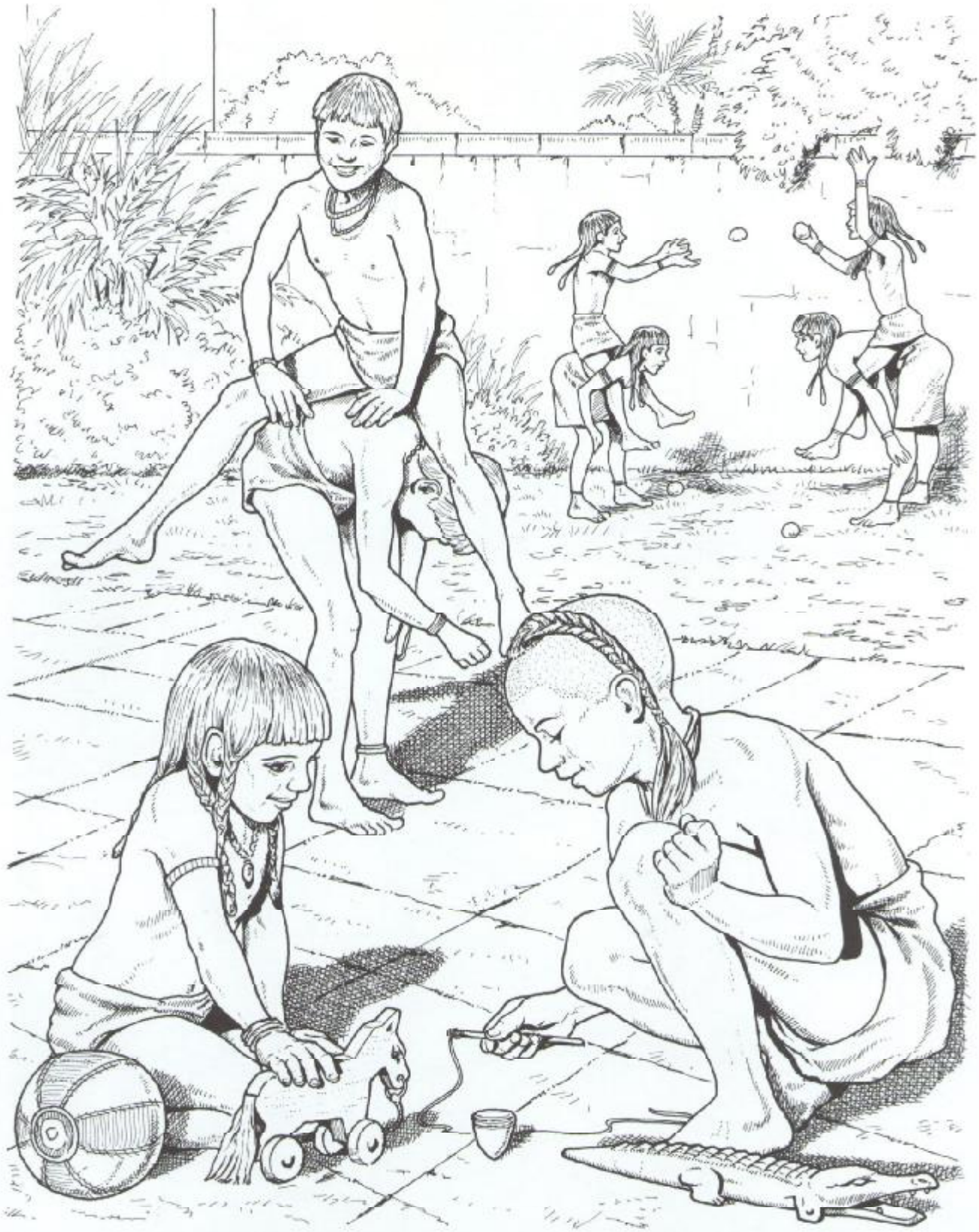


A sculptor carving a low-relief wall decoration. Low-relief sculpture (in which the figures stand out only slightly from the background) was used on palace, tomb and temple walls at many different periods of Egyptian history, especially in the Old Kingdom. (In the New Kingdom, sunken relief, in which the outlines of the figures are recessed into the wall surface, was more popular.) Draftsmen drew the contours of the figures for the sculptor to follow. The mythological scene being carved here depicts the separation of the sky (the goddess Nut) from the earth (the god Geb, lying on the ground), accomplished by the god of the air Shu (with arms raised in support).

Painting interior wall decorations. The stone wall was smoothed with plaster, and then a light grid of squares was drawn with the aid of ropes. These squares, corresponding to the small ones covering the sketch originally drawn on papyrus, made it easy to transfer the drawing to the wall. Assistants are mixing colors. Oil lamps illuminate the working area. Painted wall decoration reached its height and greatest extent in the New Kingdom. This mural depicts a pharaoh, wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt, greeting the goddess Hathor, who has cow's horns in her headdress and holds an *ankh* ("life") sign.

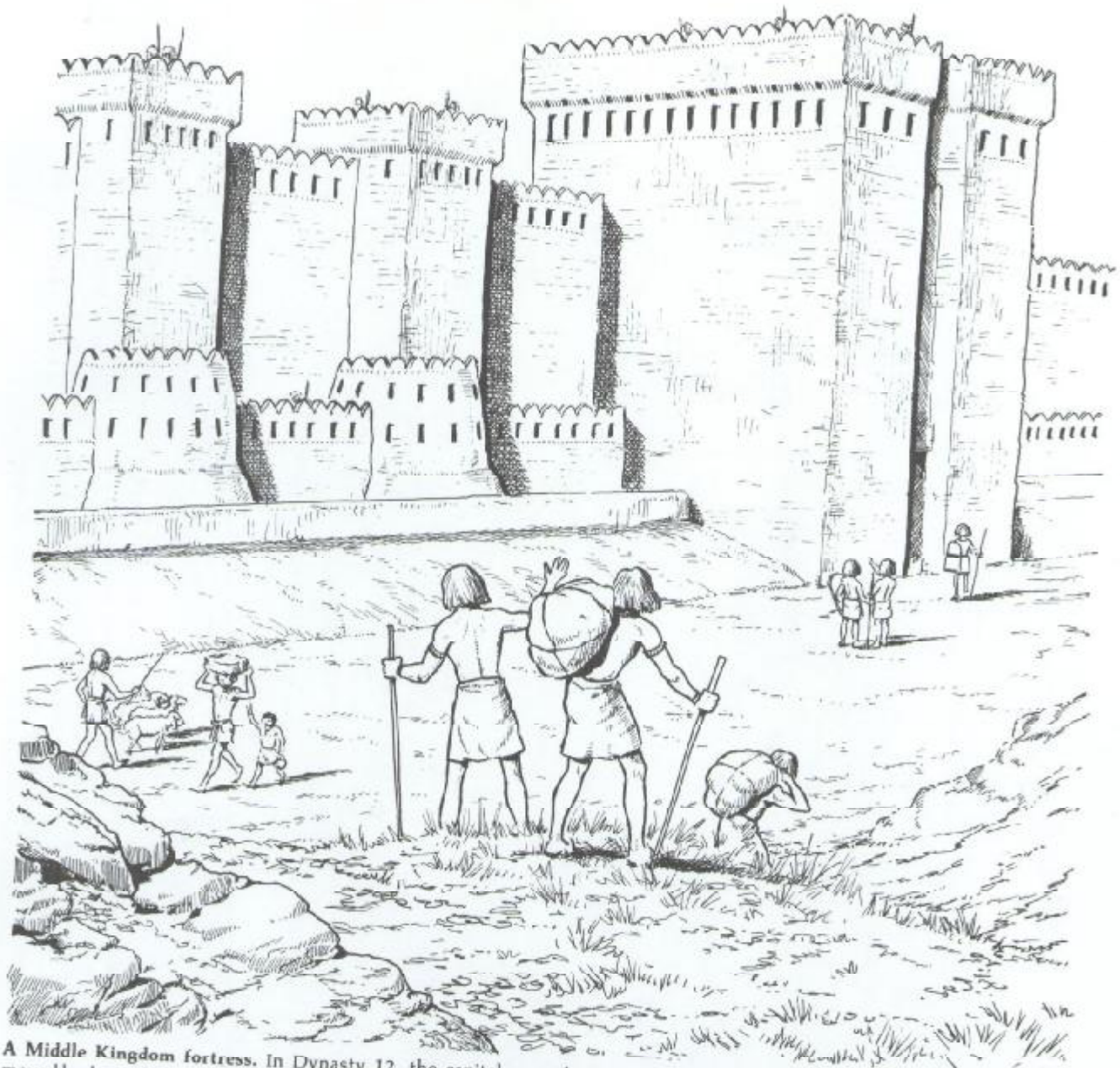
A kitchenscene. In the foreground women are grinding grain on a typical saddle-shaped grindstone and baking loaves of bread in typical cone-shaped molds. Cereals, especially barley, were also used for making beer, a favorite drink. Fruits, melons, beans and green vegetables were commonly eaten. Grapes were grown for eating and for wine making. Comparatively little meat was eaten, but fish was important, since the Nile produces some very tasty and nutritious species. In the middle background a woman is cooking a fish. In the far background, fish are hanging up to dry in the sun.

A wealthy lady applying eye shadow. Cosmetics, vanity tables, mirrors, jewelry, elaborate wigs, sheer linen gowns and beautifully carved, joined and inlaid furniture were all part of a well-to-do woman's existence. But Egyptian women were not merely ornamental. They had clear-cut legal rights of property, and a fair amount of freedom in divorce. In royal families, the female line was the key to inheriting the throne, and a number of pharaohs gained their status by marrying or adopting royal women. In the New Kingdom, Queen Tiye, wife of the indolent Amenophis III, was the power behind the throne, and Queen Hatshepsut made herself pharaoh!

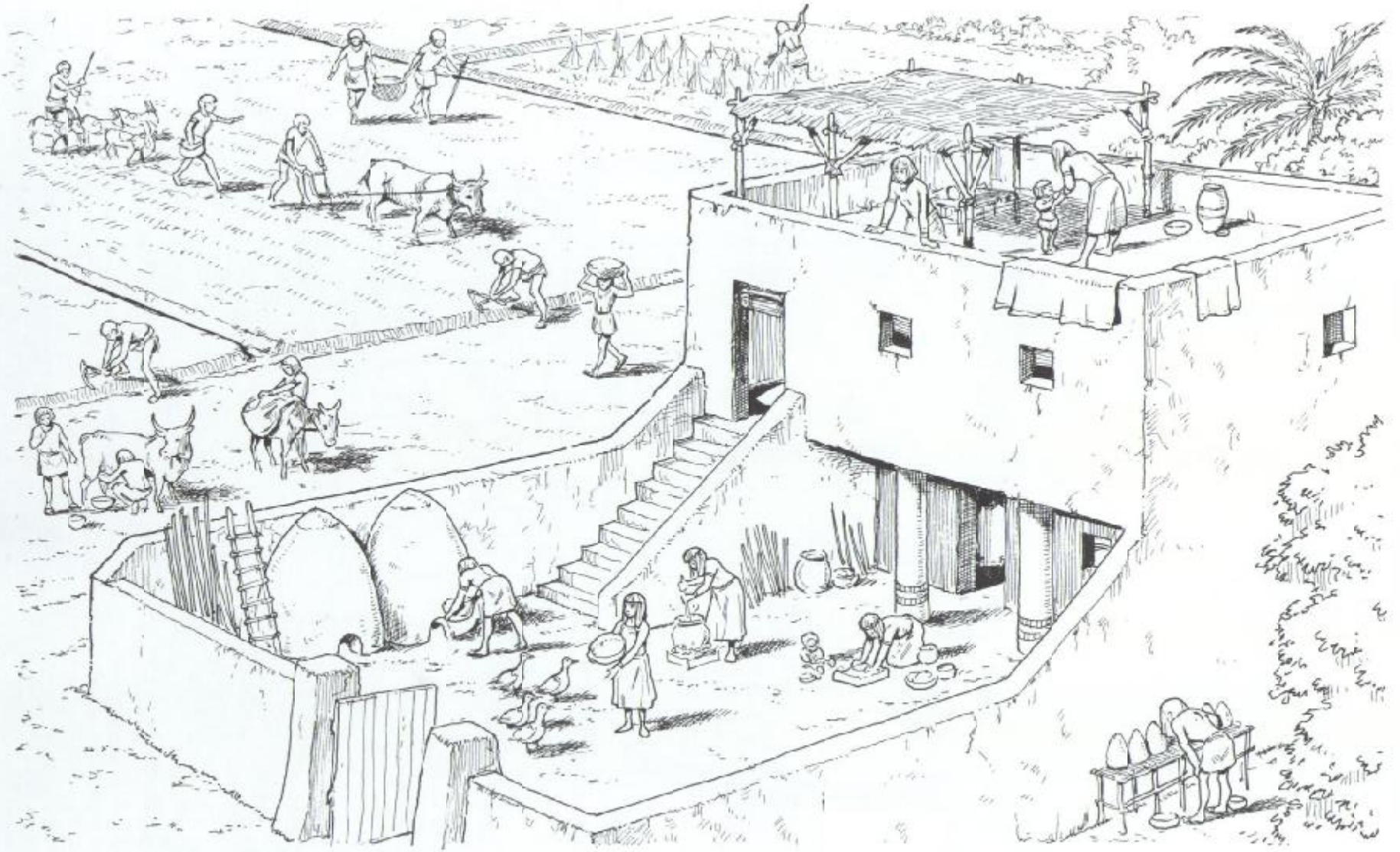


Children's toys and games. Children's amusements have remained pretty much the same around the world and throughout history, at least up to the present high-technology era. In ancient Egypt, there were toy animals and figures with movable parts and with mechanical devices using threads and pulleys. Ball games (including stick-and-ball games), wrestling, gymnastics and acrobatics were popular with all ages. A great variety of board games were also in use, like the game of *senet* being played by Akhenaten and Nefertiti in the illustration on page 32.

Mentuhotep II receiving Asian ambassadors. The centralized authority of the Old Kingdom (Dynasties 3–6; see pages 5 and 6) collapsed as various provincial governors seized power locally. The so-called First Intermediate Period (the brief Dynasties 7–10) was a time of civil war and chaos lasting several decades. A Theban family rose to the top as Dynasty 11, initiating the Middle Kingdom (Dynasties 11 and 12, ca. 2130–1780 B.C.). The greatest pharaoh of Dynasty 11 was Mentuhotep II (reigned ca. 2060–2010 B.C.), who completed the reunification of Egypt and restored its international prestige. The Middle Kingdom was to become another high point of Egyptian culture.



A Middle Kingdom fortress. In Dynasty 12, the capital moved back north, to the neighborhood of the Faiyum oasis (see map, page 2). Powerful pharaohs like Sesostris I and Sesostris III extended Egyptian control over Libya, Nubia and the passageway to Asia east of the Nile Delta. In some of these areas, permanent fortifications were constructed. But the arts of peace were also cultivated. The Middle Kingdom was the classical period of Egyptian language and literature. In the field of religion, the promise of eternal life—reserved only for the pharaoh and top nobility throughout most of the Old Kingdom—was now, in the cult of Osiris, offered to much broader sections of the population.

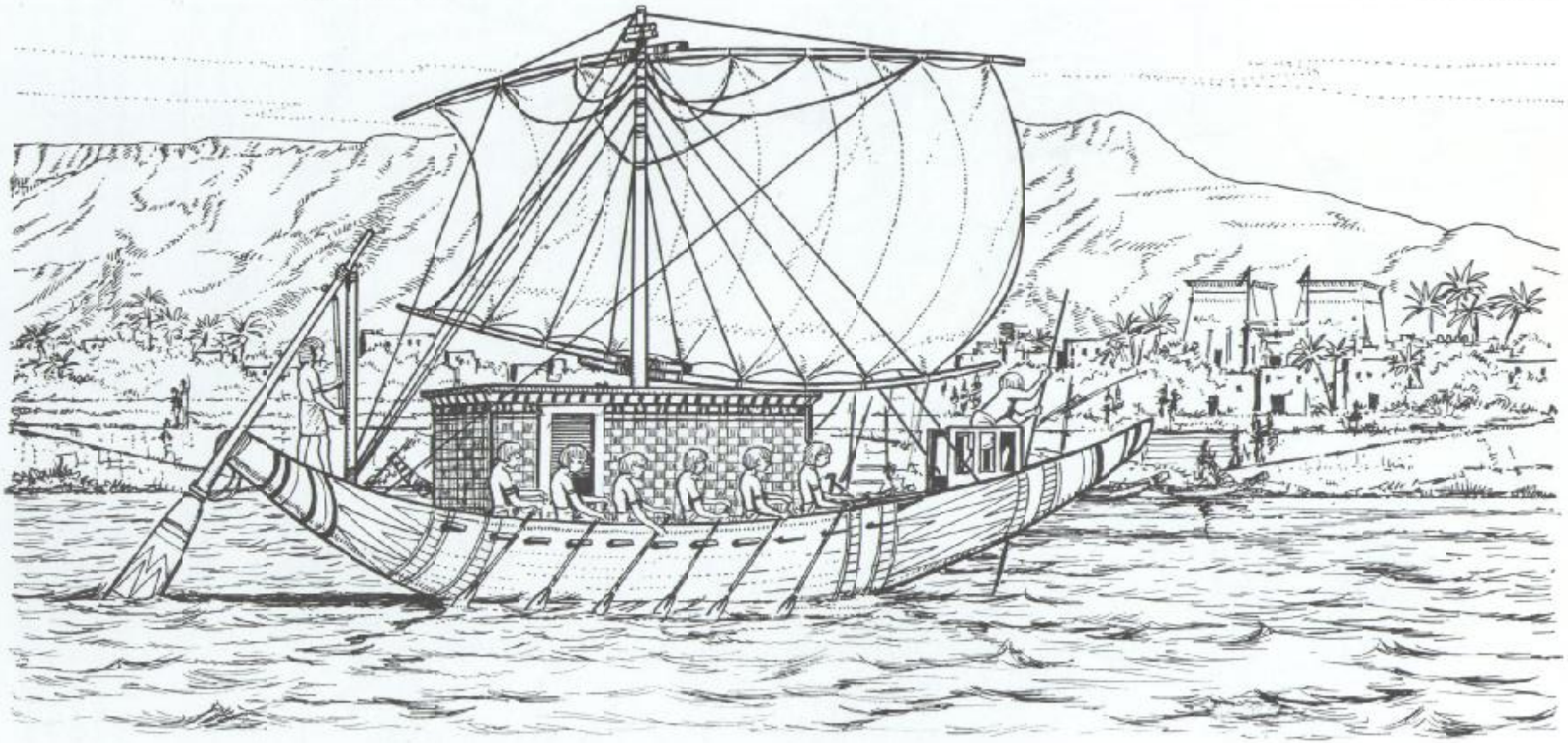


A Middle Kingdom farmhouse scene. Though there are scores of representations of rural activities in the form of low reliefs or paintings on the walls of Old and New Kingdom tombs, the numerous wooden models of houses, workshops and boats discovered in the tombs of Middle Kingdom estate owners have a special immediacy and charm, and have supplied much information on daily life. Here we see a typical flat-roofed house, partly supported on columns. In the yard, with its granaries, people are preparing food and feeding ducks. To the right, a man is examining beehives. In the fields men are plowing, sowing, milking and opening irrigation canals.

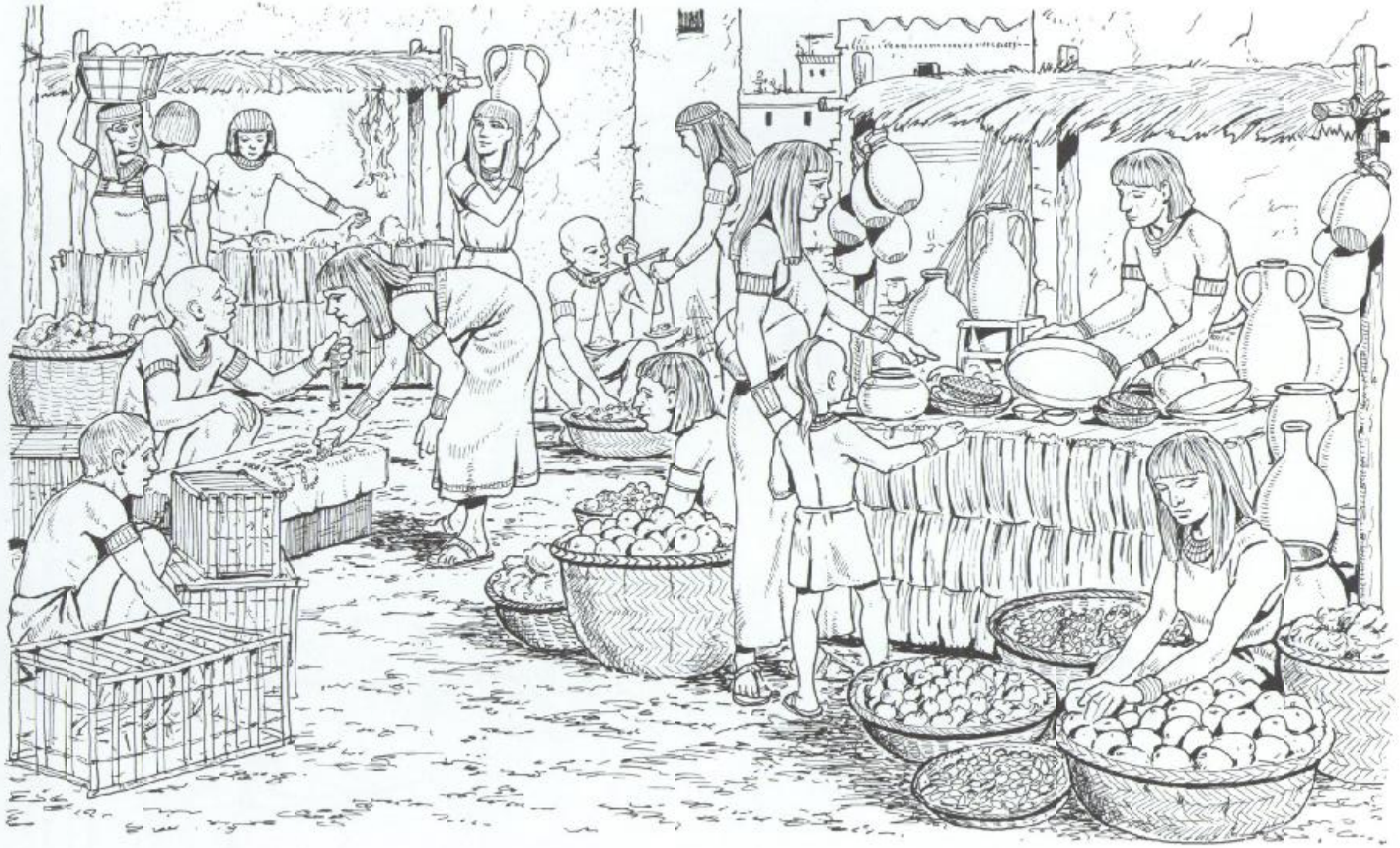
A Hyksos hunting chariot. The Second Intermediate Period (ca. 1780–1550 B.C.) saw a renewed weakening of the central government (Dynasties 13 and 14), with many migrant bands of Asiatics settling in Egypt and finally dominating the country for about a hundred years (Dynasties 15 and 16). These overlords were called the Hyksos ("rulers of foreign uplands"). Once again, it was the local rulers of Thebes (Dynasty 17) who led the way in reunifying Egypt. They drove out the Asiatics and set the stage for Dynasty 18, the glorious opening of the New Kingdom. The great contribution of the Hyksos to Egypt lay in new military technology, especially the horse and chariot, which they introduced to the Nile valley.

A New Kingdom banquet. The New Kingdom, or Empire Period (Dynasties 18–20; ca. 1550–1070 B.C.), is the part of Egyptian history best known to most people today because of the extent and richness of the material remains (both on sites and in museums), the outstanding personalities of some of the rulers, and the extraordinary fame of Tutankhamon's tomb furniture. It was a period of consciously planned military expansion, with Egypt's borders reaching their greatest extent and her hand lying heavily over much

of the Near East. Farflung international trade was booming, and luxury products poured into the country, along with such cultural influences as headier music and more voluptuous dance (from Asia). A feature of high life frequently represented in New Kingdom wall paintings was the banquet, with the participants wearing cones of perfume on their heads and being entertained by a variety of musical instruments. The monkey is an exotic pet from tropical Africa to the south.



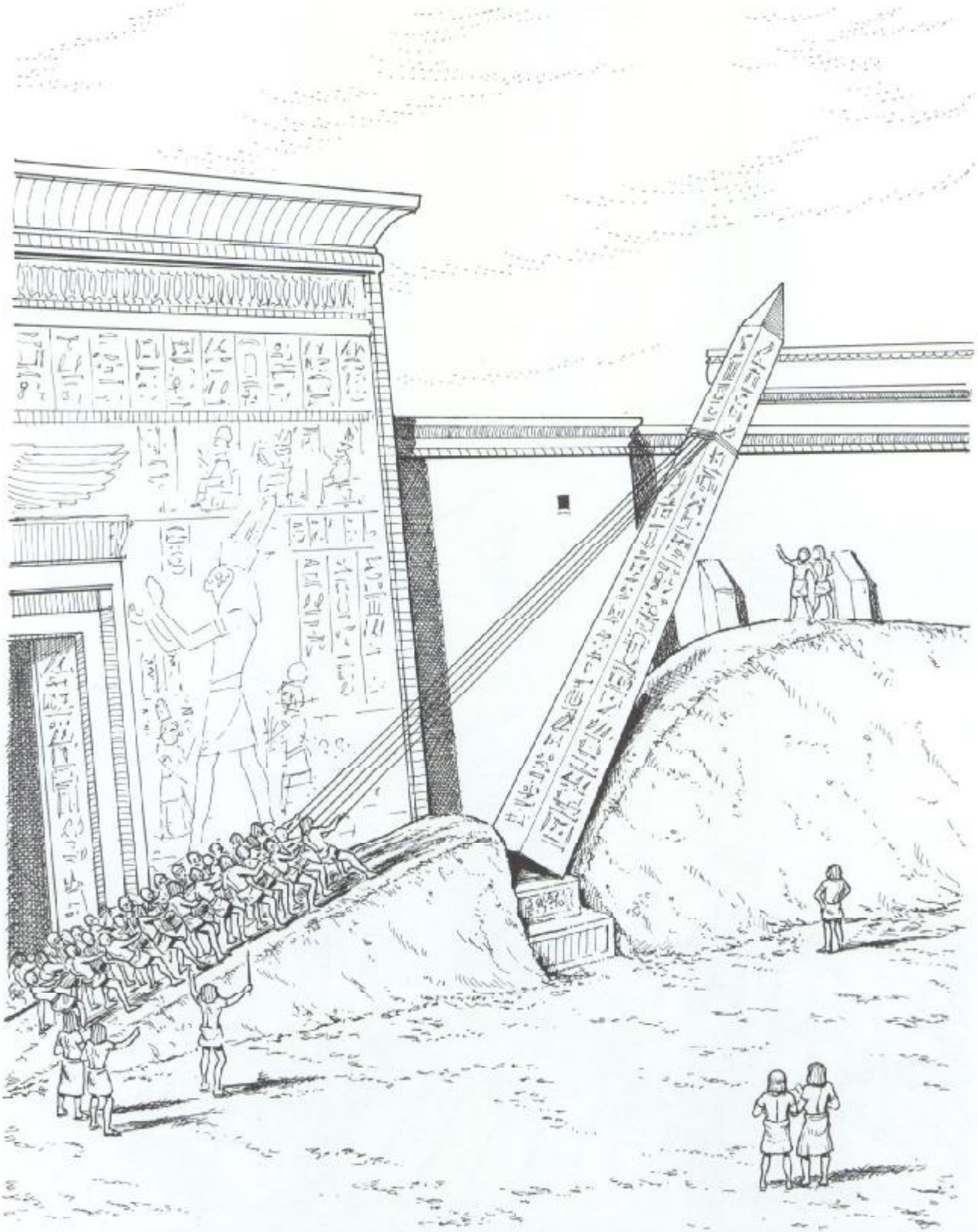
A cargo boat on the Nile. This boat, with its characteristic upturned ends, is obviously traveling south (from Lower Egypt toward Upper Egypt), and thus against the current, as shown by the sail that takes advantage of the prevailing north wind. Rising above the palms on the bank at the right are the typical pylons (gateway towers) of a temple. The New Kingdom Egyptians had a wide variety of purpose-built boats, including seagoing vessels for trade in the eastern Mediterranean (with Crete, Phoenicia, Syria) and the Red Sea (with Somalia and southern Arabia). Private enterprise was very limited, however, and large-scale commerce was the prerogative of the royal house and major temples.



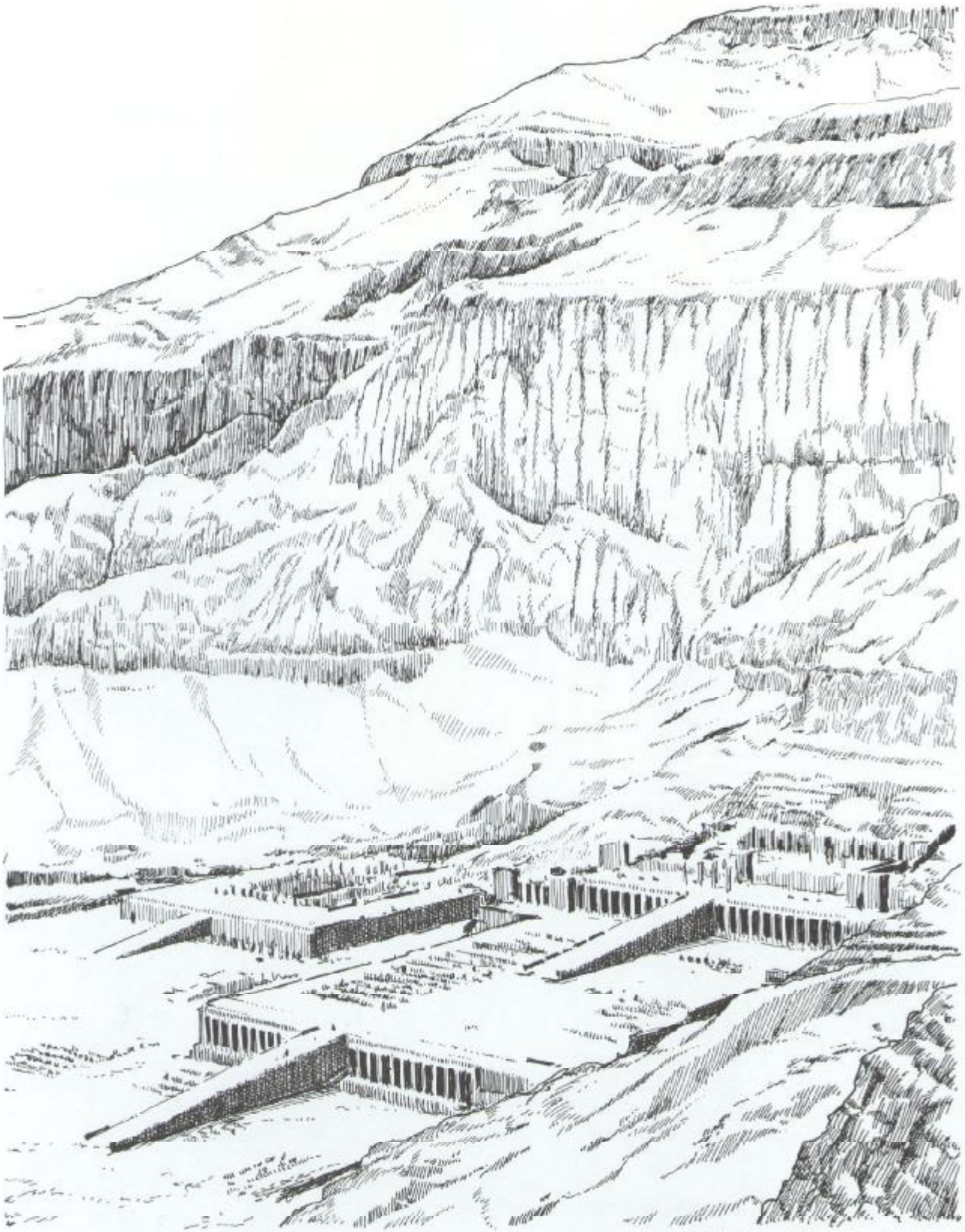
A market scene in Thebes. Local markets, unlike foreign trade, did provide scope for individual businessmen in a small way. Thebes, as the capital of New Kingdom Egypt, naturally offered a greater variety of goods to the consumer than most village markets. Being an older, traditional city, it was not laid out according to a preconceived plan like some cities newly created during the New Kingdom, but its temple complexes had extremely elaborate orientations. In the neighborhood of the city, palaces, tombs and mortuary temples dotted the landscape. Even pharaohs were now buried in rock-cut tombs (in the Valley of the Kings); pyramids were no longer built for Egyptian rulers.

A New Kingdom villa. Many wealthy Egyptians had country villas, which are frequently depicted in tomb wall paintings. (Despite their preoccupation with the afterlife, Egyptians were not morbid about death, but were taking measures to continue, or perhaps increase, the enjoyment that their earthly existence had given them.) As in all hot, dry countries, a garden with a pool was a luxurious pleasure, providing coolness as well as fruit. Cats were favorite pets; their first domestication in history may have been in Egypt in Middle or New Kingdom times.

Sculptors cutting and polishing a statue. Colossal sculpture was a typical feature of the New Kingdom, when there was clearly a desire to stun the multitude and perhaps to impress the numerous foreign dignitaries. This statue of the paramount god Amon-Re is so tall that the artists must work on a special scaffolding. The priesthood of Amon-Re, with headquarters in Thebes, was possibly the biggest property owner in the country. Egyptian sculpture is grandiose and monumental, largely because sculptors avoided extreme positions of arms, legs and body. Whether shown standing, sitting, kneeling or squatting, statues essentially remained solid blocks of stone with no lightly connected or widely projecting parts.



Raising an obelisk for Queen Hatshepsut. Hatshepsut (reigned 1490–1470 B.C.), the most fascinating woman in Egyptian history before Cleopatra, was the wife of Tuthmosis II, the fourth pharaoh of Dynasty 18. While regent for her orphaned stepson (later Tuthmosis III), she proclaimed herself monarch. Her reign was peaceful and marked by notable artistic efforts. One of these was the installation of an obelisk—a single block of granite quarried upriver at Aswan (see map, page 2)—in the grounds of the great temple of Karnak at Thebes. Obelisks, connected with solar worship since the Old Kingdom, may have originally represented the first hill that appeared on earth.



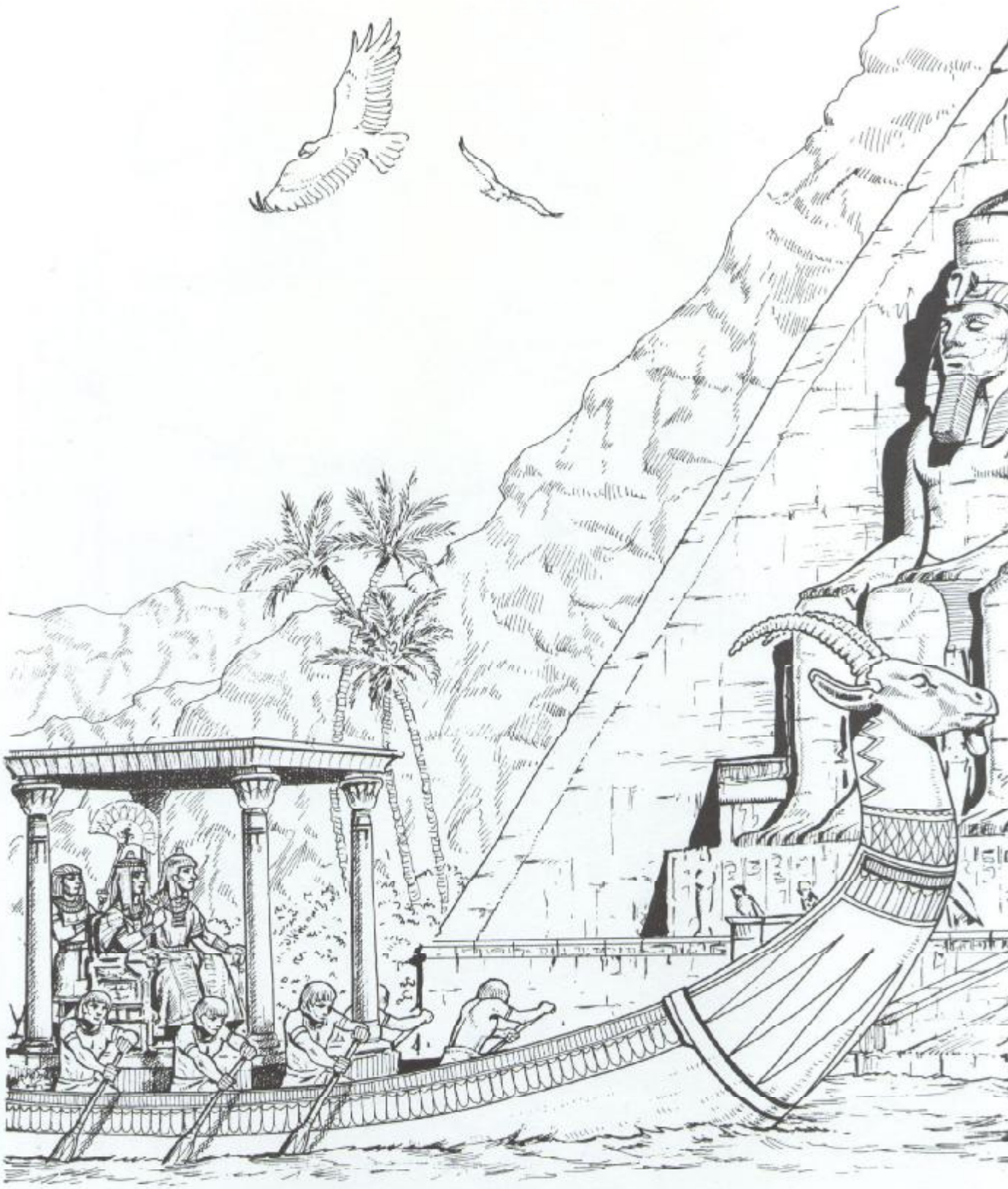
Hatshepsut's mortuary temple. The queen's greatest monument to herself was this temple on the west bank of the Nile opposite Thebes, in which she was to be worshiped after her death. It is the larger structure, on the right, the smaller one being the temple built for himself by Mentuhotep II of Dynasty 11 (see page 20). Not far away are such other major tourist sites as the Valley of the Kings, Valley of the Queens and the "Colossi of Memnon." Hatshepsut's successors, Tuthmosis III and Amenophis (Amenhotep) II, were great warriors, but were followed by pharaohs who loved their ease and ruled by diplomacy and political marriages.

Akhenaten and his queen Nefertiti playing *senet*. The most controversial figure in Egyptian history, Amenophis IV (reigned 1365–1349 B.C.) changed his name to Akhenaten after transferring his worship from the many national gods, headed by Amon-Re, to Aten, the solar disk, in a nearly exclusive cult. The stiff resistance to his intention of converting the whole country led to his creation of a new capital city far from Thebes, in the area of present-day Tell el-Amarna (see map, page 2). The art that he commissioned was unlike that of any other reign, showing the royal family in many nonceremonial activities. The noble hymns composed to Aten may have influenced the Psalms of David.

A gold mummy-mask of Tutankhamon. It is not clear exactly what blood relationship Akhenaten's young successor Tutankhamon (reigned 1347–1337 B.C.) bore to him, but the boy certainly became a son-in-law of Akhenaten. At any rate, as his name shows, Tutankhamon was back in the fold of the god Amon-Re, totally overshadowed as pharaoh by traditionalist advisers, generals and priests. More striking than anything in his brief life was the discovery of his tomb in 1922—the first tomb found up to that time that had not been extensively looted in ancient times. The magnificent objects found by Howard Carter astonished the world, and are still the primary attraction for most visitors to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo.

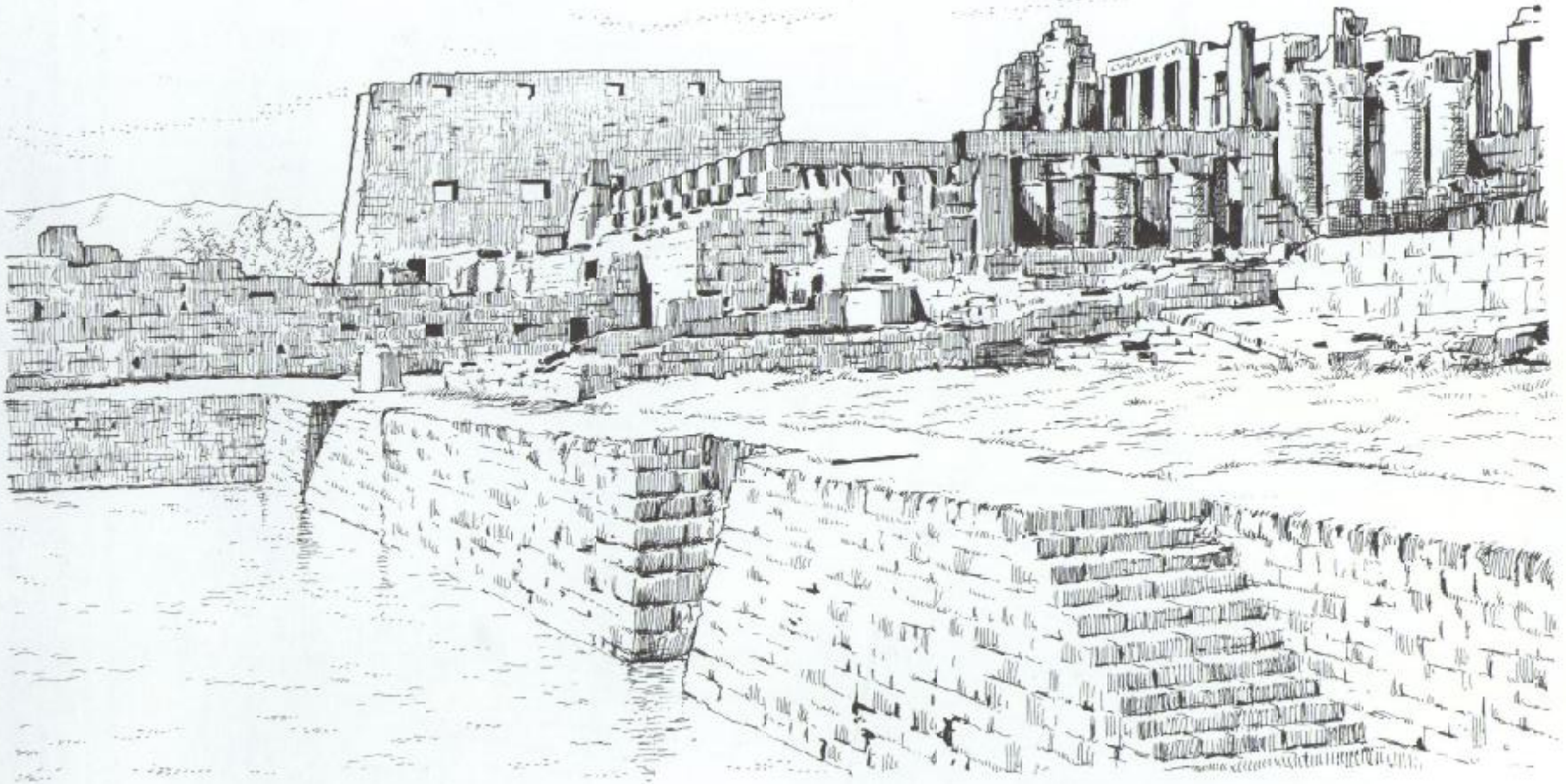
A pectoral from Tutankhamon's tomb. This ornament, worn on the chest, shows a scarab beetle with hawk's feathers, several uraeus cobras, and the eye of Horus (see page 11). Dynasty 18 ended about thirty years after Tutankhamon's death, its last ruler being the capable general Horemheb, who restored the concept of the warrior pharaoh and strengthened the government's hand at home and abroad after decades of increasing weakness. Horemheb's vizier (chief minister) founded Dynasty 19, taking the name Ramses I. Egypt was still to be a major power in Dynasty 19, but times had changed and her rivals were now too strong for her to dominate the Near East.

Ramses II in battle. Known as Ramses the Great (reigned 1290–1224 B.C.), this grandson of Ramses I is probably the pharaoh most familiar to people today. A great self-publicizer, he proclaimed his deeds on conspicuous monuments throughout the land. The capital was now in the far northeast, not far from Tanis (see map, page 2), near the entrance to Asia; the continued control of Syria and what is now the Holy Land was a primary national concern. Egypt had a powerful new rival: the Hittite Empire in present-day Turkey. At the battle of Kadesh in Syria, their armies clashed inconclusively. Ramses II spoke of a clear-cut Egyptian victory, but the battle was a draw, and led to the earliest recorded peace treaty in history.

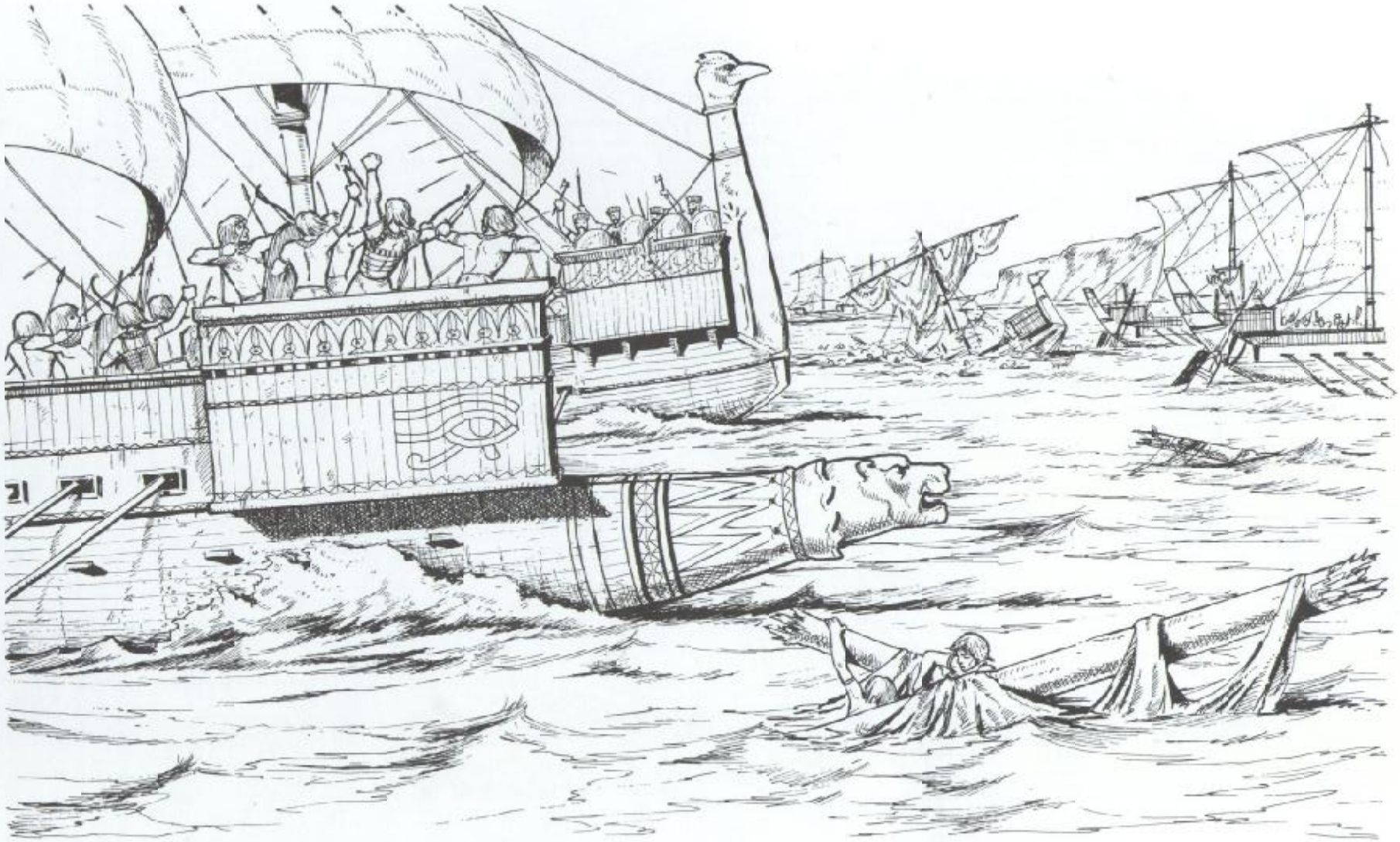


The temple at Abu Simbel. Even though Ramses II added his name to many statues and structures actually built by predecessors, and even though his actual constructions were often not as fine as the best earlier work, nevertheless he left us some very impressive reminders of his reign. The most famous nowadays is his double temple in honor of himself and his wife (but technically sacred to various gods) at Abu Simbel in Nubia (see map, page 2). The four statues of Ramses are 66 feet high. The temple halls, passage and sanctuary were cut directly into the cliff. In the 1960s, when

the lower-lying portions of this part of Nubia were scheduled to disappear beneath the man-made Lake Nasser, as an adjunct to the new Aswan High Dam, international rescue teams moved 23 local temples to new sites. Among them was this Abu Simbel temple, which was cut into blocks and reassembled 210 feet farther up, on a flat space atop the original cliff. This was one of the most remarkable engineering feats of modern times. Abu Simbel is now even a greater tourist attraction than ever before.

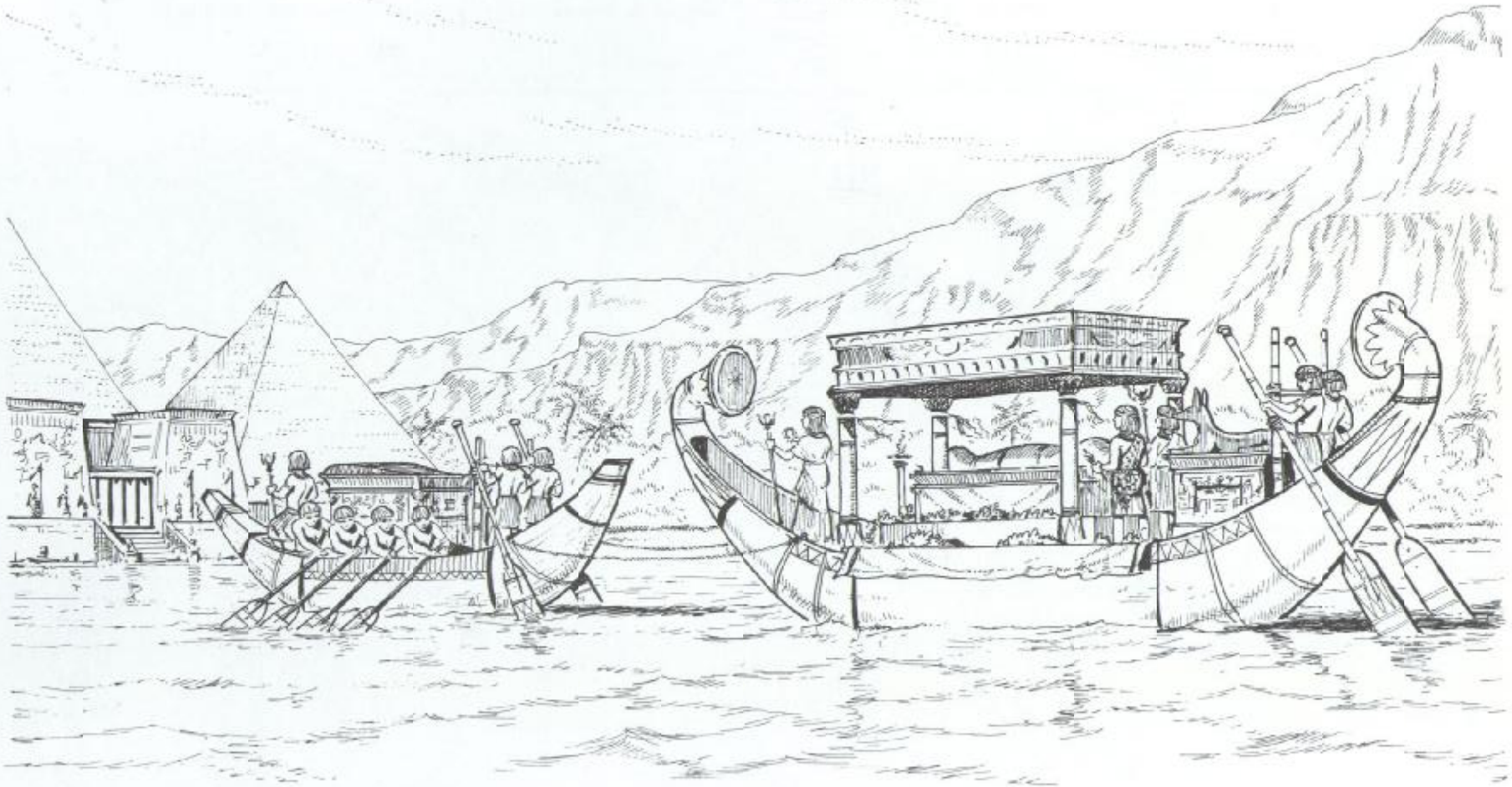


A partial view of the temple of Karnak (Thebes). One of the great building projects of Dynasty 19—begun by Ramses I and completed by his son Seti I, but claimed as his own by Ramses II—was the hypostyle hall (hall of columns) in the temple of Karnak. This hall is the central structure in the middle ground of this view, as seen from one side of the sacred lake. Measuring 335 by 169 feet, the hypostyle hall contains 140 columns with papyrus-flower capitals; its central aisle is 78 feet high. The five-acre temple of Karnak, the national shrine of the god Amen-Re, was begun in the Middle Kingdom, continual additions being made until as late as the third century B.C. (Ptolemaic period).



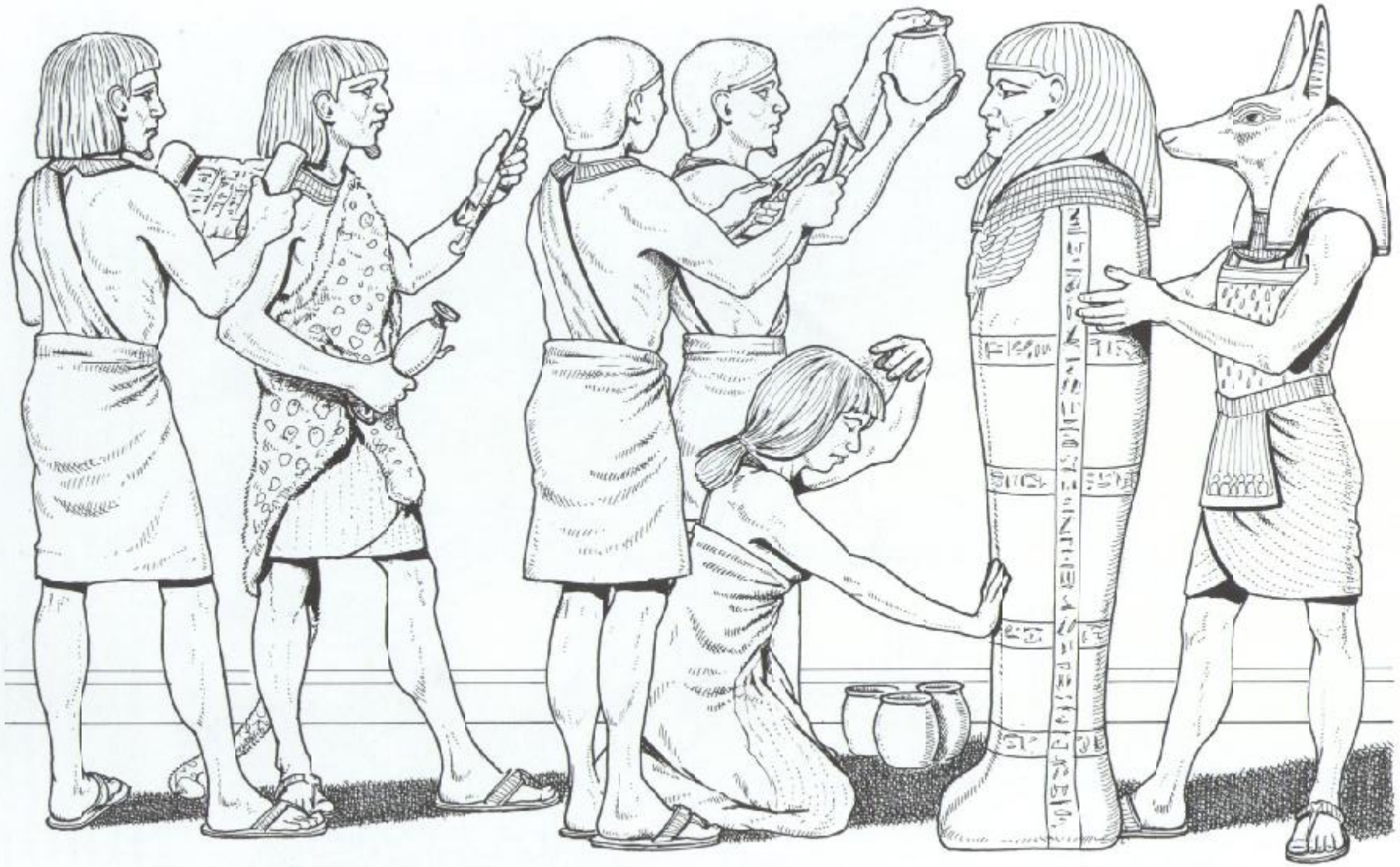
Ramses III battles the Sea Peoples. Ramses III (reigned ca. 1193–1162 B.C.), second pharaoh of Dynasty 20, was the last effective ruler of the New Kingdom. The Sea Peoples were a coalition of groups from western Asia and eastern Europe who descended upon the eastern Mediterranean with devastating effect. The Hittite Empire never recovered. Ramses III saved Egypt in two battles, one of them a naval battle in the Nile Delta. The Sea Peoples who then sailed west probably included the ancestors of the Sicilians and Etruscans. Among those who settled to the east of Egypt were the Philistines, future enemies of Samson and David. Egyptian conditions deteriorated nevertheless, and after Dynasty 20 Egypt was rarely ever in control of her own destinies.

An embalming workshop. Since Egyptians believed that the preservation of the body was a prerequisite for eternal life, they practiced embalming, or mummification. The internal organs were removed from the corpse and placed for burial in four jars (known as Canopic jars) with animal and human heads (representing protective gods). The body was cleansed, specially treated and tightly wrapped. The sculpture of the jackal depicts the mortuary god Anubis. The human-headed bird shown in the lower left corner is the *ba*, an aspect of the soul that could travel far from the tomb but had to return there.



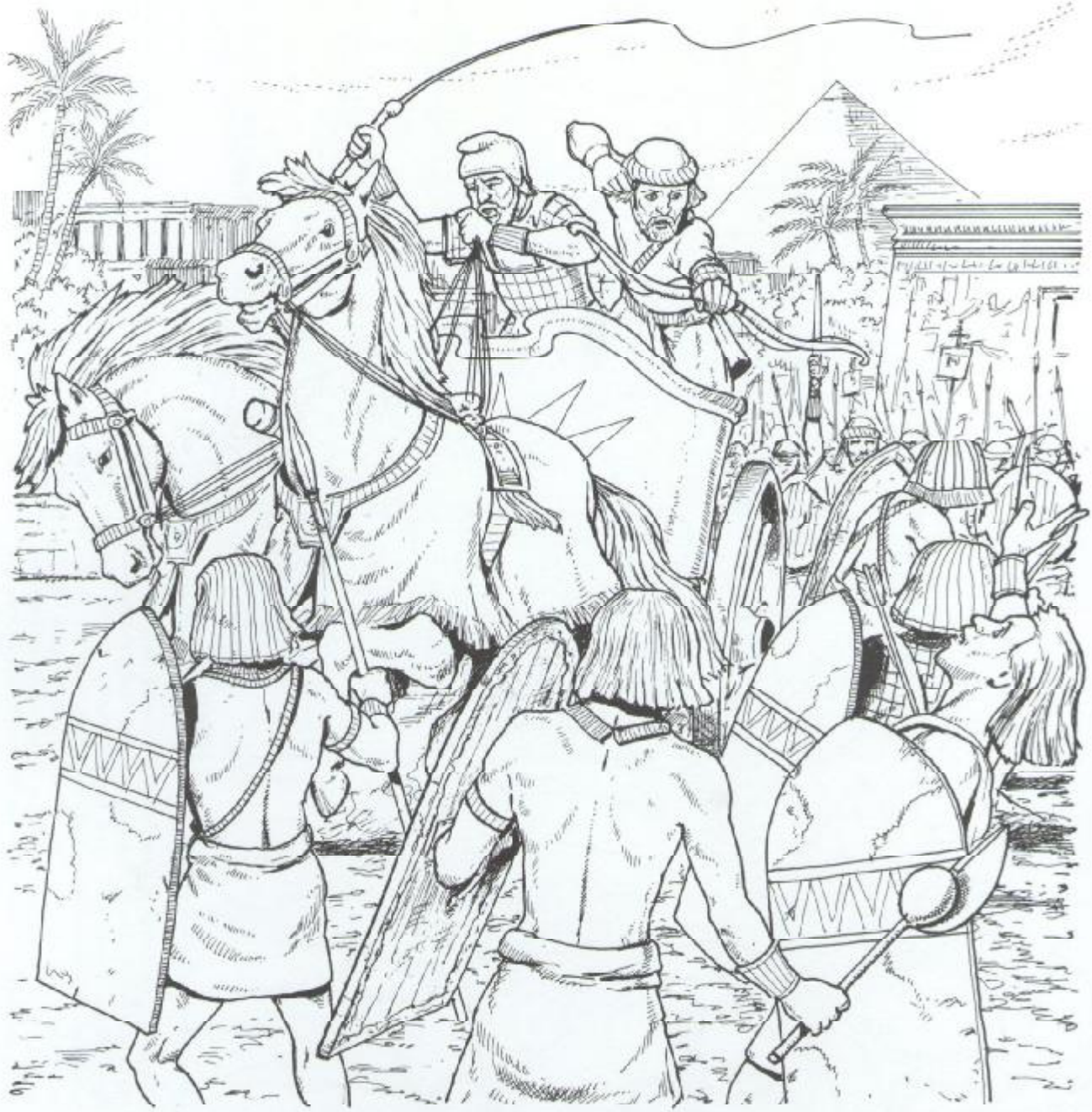
Funeral boats crossing the Nile. Burials were usually on the west bank, indicated here in the left-hand background by Old Kingdom pyramids and the elaborate landing stage of a pharaoh's funerary complex. Although it appears that in reality the embalming workshops were also on the west bank (and thus the funeral cortege would have collected the mummy *after* crossing the river), at least one New Kingdom wall painting shows the mummy on one of the funeral boats, as in the illustration here. The chest surmounted by Anubis is the Canopic chest, containing the Canopic jars. Other boats transported additional funeral equipment, including numerous valuable objects, formerly owned by the dead person, that would also be buried in the tomb.

The funeral procession to the tomb. The corpse was transported from the river on a boat-shaped bier mounted on a sledge hauled by oxen. The Canopic chest was carried in front, the servants with the grave goods forming a lengthy file behind. One priest would recite prayers; another, the one seen wearing the leopard skin, was the director of the religious activities. Ritual dancers and professional female mourners would also participate. A priest impersonating Anubis and a priestess impersonating the goddess Hathor are seen here waiting by the tomb, where further rituals had to be enacted before the mummy was finally placed in a nested set of coffins, the innermost ones shaped like the body ("mummy cases").



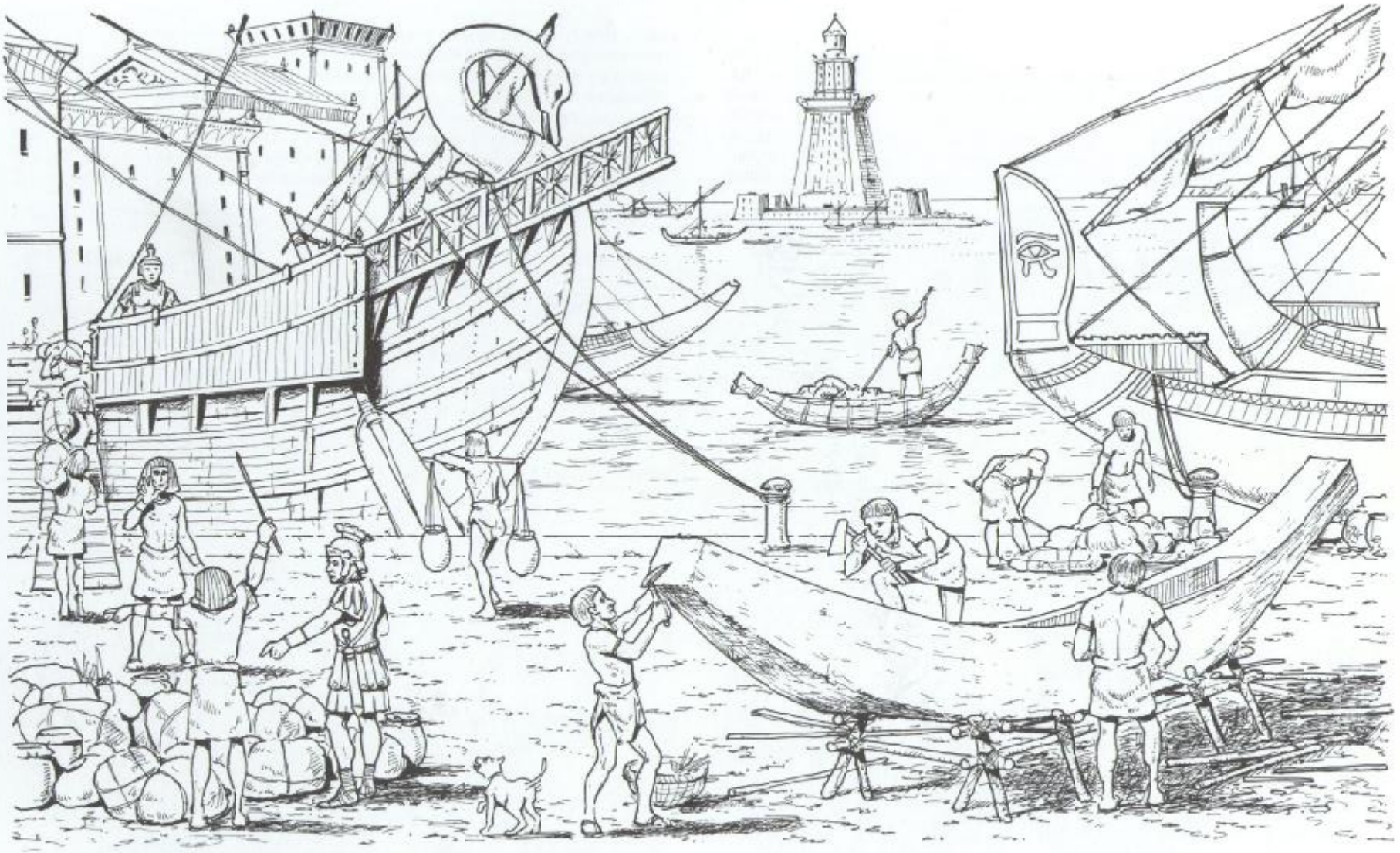
The opening-of-the-mouth ceremony. This was performed at the tomb, with the three priests mentioned in the preceding caption in attendance. The mummy's face would be touched with various ritual objects in the form of archaic tools. This ceremony gave back to the deceased the full use of his or her body for the unimpeded fruition of new, eternal life after death. In the New Kingdom and later, a copy of the so-called Book of the Dead, containing instructions to the deceased on proper procedures and behavior in the underworld, was enclosed in one of the coffins. (Protective amulets and jewelry had already been placed directly on the mummy.) A mourners' feast concluded the funeral after the sealing of the burial chamber.

Assyrian soldiers besieging Thebes. After the New Kingdom, Egypt fell on troubled times. Dynasties 21–24 (1070–750 B.C.), sometimes grouped as the Third Intermediate Period, saw the nation split in two once more, with weak pharaohs at Tanis in the north and counter-pharaohs at Thebes in the south. The more capable pharaohs who reunited the country in Dynasties 22–24 were no longer native Egyptians, but Libyans who had settled in Egypt before seizing power. The Dynasty 25 rulers, on the other hand, were Nubians (also referred to as Kushites or Ethiopians). This dynasty fell after invasions by Assyria, which had replaced the Hittites as Egypt's rival in the Near East. Thebes was totally plundered.

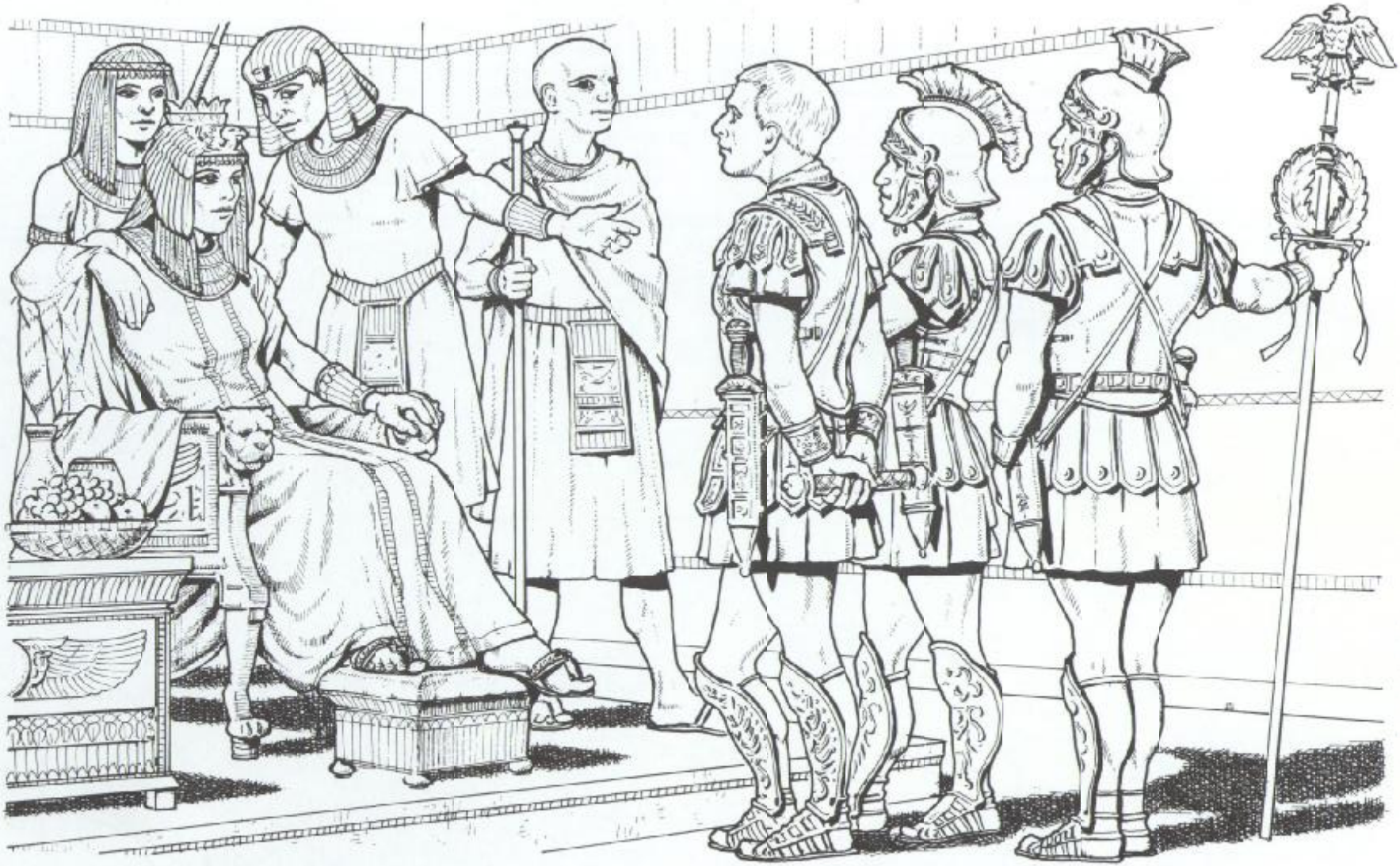


The Persian conquest of Egypt. Dynasty 26, headed by native rulers once more, with their capital at Sais in the Delta, was the last glorious period of Egyptian independence, enjoying a great upsurge of artistic activity. (The Old Kingdom was now the admired and imitated model.) This dynasty fell to the invading Persians, led by their monarch Cambyses II, in 525 B.C. During Persian rule (Dynasty 27), Greek traders and mercenaries continued to enter northern Egypt in significant numbers. The great Greek historian Herodotus, who visited Egypt about 450 B.C., has left us valuable information about this era.

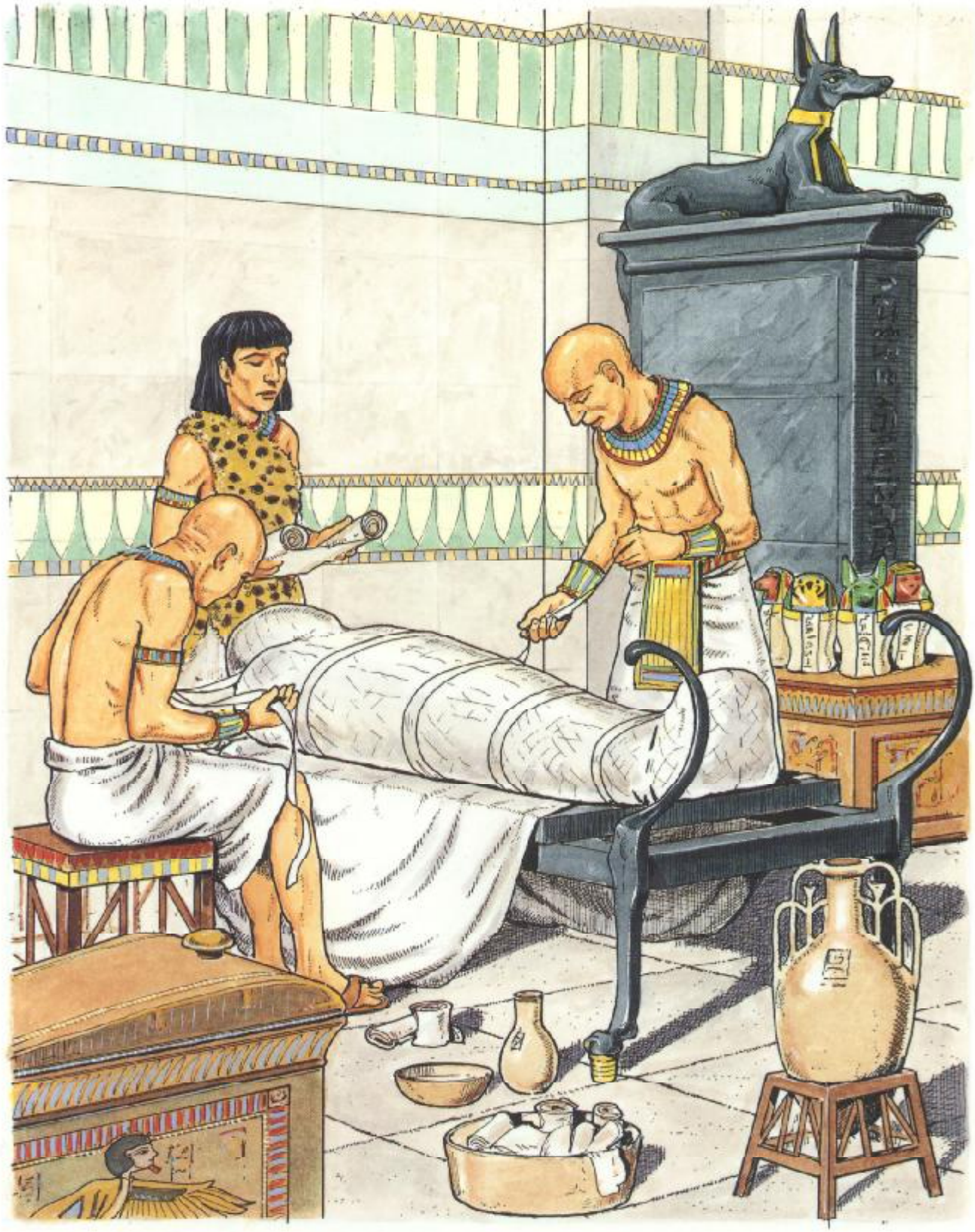
Alexander the Great triumphant. Dynasties 28–30 (404–343 B.C.) represented a last flickering of relative independence for Egypt before Persia took over again (Dynasty 31, the last numbered one). When Persia finally lost Egypt, it had lost almost everything: Alexander the Great (lived 356–323 B.C.), the world-conqueror from Macedonia, "delivered" Egypt in 332, only months before his decisive victory over the Persian Empire in Mesopotamia. Crowned as pharaoh at Memphis, Alexander founded the city of Alexandria at the western end of the Delta (see map, page 2). This was destined to become one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. After Alexander's death, his vast empire was divided among his leading generals, who launched new dynasties. The line founded by his general Ptolemy, who became pharaoh in 305, was to last until 30 B.C.



The port of Alexandria. During the reign of the Ptolemies (the Hellenistic era of ancient history), their capital Alexandria took over the intellectual leadership of the Greek world that had once belonged to Athens. Not only did the busy harbor boast a world-famous lighthouse, the Pharos; but the museum and library were centers of scholarship, literature and science. In most of Egyptian territory, everyday life went on much as usual, except for the growing Greek presence and new administrative measures. Native Egyptians served in government, even at very high levels. (The ruling family themselves, including the famous Cleopatra, had no Egyptian blood.) Religious tolerance was so complete that there was some intermixture of beliefs and practices. Some of the most famous traditional Egyptian temples still visited today date from Ptolemaic times: Dendera, Edfu, Kom Ombo and Philae.



Caesar and Cleopatra. Julius Caesar, arriving in Egypt in 48 B.C. in pursuit of Pompey, his rival for supremacy in Rome, fell in love with Cleopatra VII and supported her disputed claim to the throne. After his assassination in 44, a new contender for Roman leadership, Mark Antony, became Cleopatra's new champion. They jointly ruled Egypt and large parts of the Near East until defeated by Augustus, soon to become the first Roman emperor. Antony and Cleopatra committed suicide in 30 B.C., and Egypt became a province of the Roman Empire, supplying Rome with much of its grain. When the Empire split in two, in 395 A.D., Egypt found itself in the eastern, the Byzantine, half. One of the great centers of early Christianity, Egypt was the original home of monasticism. The so-called Coptic art of this period is highly regarded today. Conquered by the Arabs in the 640s, Egypt has been an Islamic land ever since.



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